

JUDAISM

NOV 19 1986

AMBASSADOR
COLLEGE LIBRARY

THE HOLOCAUST

WHAT SHOULD BE ITS ROLE TODAY?

Irving Halperin

Michael Berenbaum

Daniel Jeremy Silver

A FRESH LOOK AT BIBLICAL HEROES

Jacob: David Jeremy Zucker

Saul: Herman M. van Praag

THE 70TH YORTSAYT OF SHOLOM ALEICHEM

Emanuel S. Goldsmith

ISSUE No. 140 / VOLUME 35 / NUMBER 4 / \$3.50 **FALL 1986**

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP

The American Jewish Congress is sponsoring the publication of JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE AND THOUGHT as part of its basic policy to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, encourage Jewish scholarship and adequate opportunities for Jewish education, and generally foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural, and historic identity.

JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication among Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Editors or the American Jewish Congress.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

Because of the very high cost involved in copies of the journal being sent to wrong addresses, our subscribers are urgently requested to notify our office in writing six weeks before a change of address takes place.

In the absence of such notification, all copies returned to us by the post office will be remailed only upon the payment of an itemized bill for the additional postage.

All copies that are not returned to us by the post office will be replaced only upon the payment of an itemized bill for the additional copy, as well as for the additional postage.

BACK COPIES

We are frequently asked for reprints of individual articles. While we cannot accede to such requests, many back issues are available for \$3.00 each. Orders must be accompanied with payment.

NOTICE TO AUTHORS

It is suggested that authors keep a copy of the manuscript sent to our office. Unsolicited material will be returned only if accompanied by postage.

Material appearing in the pages of JUDAISM (except for brief passages cited for discussion) may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the Editors.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Religious and Theological Abstracts* and *The Index of Jewish Periodicals*.

JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL is published by the American Jewish Congress. It appears in January, April, July and October. Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Re-entered as second-class matter at Post Office, New York City, N.Y. Subscription in the United States and Canada, \$12.00 for one year, \$20.00 for two years, \$28.00 for three years; foreign subscription, \$13.00 for one year, \$22.00 for two years, \$31.00 for three years. All payments for subscriptions and mailings outside of the United States must be paid for in American dollars and drawn on an American bank because of the high cost of processing foreign checks. Special rate for bulk (10 or more) and student subscriptions, \$8.00. Single issue, \$3.50; single issue abroad, \$4.00. Make checks payable to the order of JUDAISM, and send to 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Allow six weeks for notice of change of address.

US ISSN 0022-5762

The Board of Editors invites articles, communications, comments and discussion for publication. Address: Editors, JUDAISM, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Copyright © 1986 by the American Jewish Congress.

JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Issue No. 140 / Volume 35 / Number 4 / Fall 1986

<i>The First Reader</i>	R.G.	387
<i>The Divine Humor of Sholom Aleichem on His 70th Yortsayt</i>	EMANUEL S. GOLDSMITH	391
<i>Jacob in Darkness (And Light): A Study In Contrasts</i>	DAVID JEREMY ZUCKER	402
<i>The Downfall of King Saul: The Neurobiological Consequences of Losing Hope</i>	HERMAN M. VAN PRAAG	414
<i>"Everything Is In It": Rabbinic Interpretation and Modern Literary Theory</i>	SUSAN HANDELMAN	429
<i>Teaching the Holocaust by Indirection</i>	IRVING HALPERIN	441
<i>Icarus Too</i> (poem)	BERNHARD FRANK	446
<i>The Nativization of the Holocaust</i>	MICHAEL BERENBAUM	447
<i>Choose Life</i>	DANIEL JEREMY SILVER	458
<i>Visions of the Past: Jews and Greeks</i>	HOWARD JACOBSON	467
<i>The Wall of Communication</i>	MORDECAI ROSHWALD	483
<i>Judaism As Tragic Religion</i>	BERNARD OCH	487

REVIEWS

<i>Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: A Scholar Outcast</i> by Y.D. Gilat	BARUCH M. BOKSER	495
<i>The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election</i> by Michael Wyschogrod	NORBERT M. SAMUELSON	497
<i>The First Liberty. Religion and the American Republic</i> by William Lee Miller	SAMUEL RABINOVE	501

BOOKS RECEIVED	505
----------------	-----

INDEX to Volume 35	509
--------------------	-----

Editor
ROBERT GORDIS

Managing Editor
RUTH B. WAXMAN

Contributing Editors

JACOB B. AGUS, Baltimore, Md. • ALEXANDER ALTMAN Waltham, Mass. • SALO W. BARON, Canaan, Conn. • MEIR BEN-HORIN, Beachwood, Ohio. • EUGENE B. BOROWITZ, New York, N.Y. • WILLIAM G. BRAUDE, Providence, R.I. • GERSON D. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • EMIL L. FACKENHEIM, Jerusalem, Israel • MICHAEL FISHBANE, Waltham, Mass. • DAVID FLUSSER, Jerusalem, Israel • MARVIN FOX, Waltham, Mass. • SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, Pittsburgh, Pa. • MAURICE FRIEDMAN, San Diego, Cal. • THEODORE FRIEDMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • NAHUM N. GLATZER, Waltham, Mass. • JUDAH GOLDIN, Philadelphia, Pa. • ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN, Jerusalem, Israel • MAX GRUENWALD, Millburn, N.J. • SUSAN HANDELMAN, College Park, Md. • MENAHEM HARAN, Jerusalem, Israel • ARTHUR HYMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERICH ISAAC, Irvington, N.Y. • MILTON R. KONVITZ, Ithaca, N.Y. • ARTHUR J. LELYVELD, Cleveland, Ohio • ANNE L. LERNER, New York, N.Y. • SOL LIPTZIN, Jerusalem, Israel • HARRY M. ORLINSKY, New York, N.Y. • JAKOB PETUCHOWSKI, Cincinnati, O. • LEO PFEFFER, New York, N.Y. • JOACHIM PRINZ, Newark, N.J. • EMANUEL RACKMAN, New York, N.Y. • NATHAN ROTENSTREICH, Jerusalem, Israel • ZALMAN M. SCHACHTER, Philadelphia, Pa. • DAVID S. SHAPIRO, Milwaukee, Wis. • DAVID WOLF SILVERMAN, Philadelphia, Pa. • ERNST SIMON, Jerusalem, Israel • SHEMARYAHU TALMON, Jerusalem, Israel • DAVID WEISS, New York, N.Y. • PAUL WEISS, Washington, D.C. • TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN, Santa Monica, Cal. • MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD, New York, N.Y.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

Judaism's Great Humorist

One of the most consistently popular Jewish writers of all times is Sholom Aleichem, often called the "Jewish Mark Twain." Not only was he beloved among the Yiddish reading and speaking masses, but he continues to hold the affection and esteem of Jews and non-Jews who speak other tongues. *Fiddler on the Roof* is perhaps the most successful musical play of our generation in all languages and cultures. Yet it represents only a tiny corner of the creative achievement of Sholom Aleichem.

1986 is the seventieth anniversary of his death and, to mark the occasion, *Emanuel Goldsmith* has written an analysis of the humor which makes Sholom Aleichem a Jewish immortal.

A New Look at Father Jacob

The Hebrew term, "Midrash," literally means "searching the Scriptures," but it has developed a broader significance of biblical interpretation. In a deep sense, which we are beginning to appreciate fully only in our day, a reader of any text is engaged in interpreting it and, by that token, is creating Midrash.

In recent years, the Bible has been the fountain-head for interpretations of biblical texts, personages and events and our readers are familiar with several striking examples of modern Midrash which have appeared in our pages.

Probably no other biblical character was subjected to so thorough a reinterpretation by the Midrash and the Talmud as the Patriarch Jacob. The all-too-human and flawed man who is depicted in the Bible emerges as a paragon of virtue and piety. This process was part of the unending effort by the Sages to build the morale of the Jewish people by exalting their leading figures.

David Jeremy Zucker presents a biography of the Patriarch from three perspectives, that of the biblical text itself, the radical transformation effected in rabbinic literature, and his own Midrash, in which Jacob emerges as a character dark and devious.

I, myself, feel that the biblical account, read on its own terms, offers a

deeper portrait of a man who is weak and fallible, but who fights his way back to a higher level of being. However, "Jacob in Darkness (And Light): A Study In Contrasts," is highly stimulating, and will surely arouse considerable interest.

Pity King Saul

For thousands of years the tragic story of the first Jewish king, Saul, has moved readers of the Bible. Historians, novelists, poets and musicians have been stimulated to explore the life and character of this modest Jewish farmer, from his rise to greatness to his swift descent into mental illness and death.

In "The Downfall of King Saul," *Herman M. van Praag*, a teacher and practitioner of psychiatry, examines the biblical narrative, explores its implications and brings scientific data to bear on the malady that afflicted his subject.

The Bible: Always New

During the past few decades, hermeneutics, or the art of literary interpretation, has undergone a many-sided development with regard to virtually all of ancient and modern literature. While there is no unanimity of approach among contemporary critics, they share a high respect for the given text and concentrate upon its meaning rather than upon the analysis of assumed sources out of which it was built.

More recently, these canons of interpretation have been applied to Jewish literature in general, and the Bible in particular. In her paper, "Everything Is In It: Rabbinic Interpretation and Modern Literary Theory," *Susan Handelman* draws upon insights of the Midrash and the Kabbalah to illumine various episodes in the Bible, discovering in them nuances not previously recognized.

How Shall We View The Holocaust?

The two decades following the Holocaust were marked by almost total silence, not only in the Christian world, but among Jews as well. Then the flood-gates were opened and a stream of publications of every conceivable kind began to pour from the presses. As Jewish Studies became a recognized feature of college curricula, courses on the Holocaust attracted the largest registration, with the possible exception of the Bible. Diaries and recollections of unspeakable torment, imaginative reconstructions of past horrors, records of heroic resistance that often survived their writers, have multiplied. Seminars, conferences and exhibits are proliferating. Finally, there are the products of solid historical research on all aspects of the catastrophe by some capable and responsible historians.

The Holocaust has also become a rallying cry for virtually every movement and group in Jewish life, and the chief weapon in the arsenal of fund-raising agencies for various causes. Each school of thought, from the extreme left to the radical right, claims to have found in the Holocaust not only a potent slogan, but a demonstration of the truth of its philosophy.

On the campus, the need for fresh techniques in teaching the subject is self-evident, in view of the danger of a mechanical approach. In his paper, "Teaching the Holocaust by Indirection," *Irving Halperin* suggests that even literary texts that seem completely unrelated may serve as excellent source material for discovering the impact upon our lives of this greatest of all tragedies.

The famous German historian, Leopold van Ranke, declared that the goal of historical research was to ascertain *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, "as it actually was." Though this is the objective to which historians aspire, it is never fully attained. Even in the physical sciences, as we now know, the observer affects the situation of the phenomena being observed. In humanistic studies, the role of the observer, his personality and background, his ideals and prejudices, play a central role in determining the results of his researches. He sets out to do history; what he creates is often meta-history.

The meaning of the Holocaust has been interpreted in radically different forms even during the few decades since the catastrophe. In his paper, "The Nativization of the Holocaust," *Michael Berenbaum* surveys the various stages in Holocaust research, and the uses to which it has been put in the service of various goals in Jewish life, both here and elsewhere.

In a paper entitled "Choose Life," *Daniel Jeremy Silver* also describes the uses to which the Holocaust is being put by the advocates of the various programs for the Jewish future. He points out that what issues from Auschwitz is a scream, not a voice; the Holocaust can energize Jews, strengthen their resolve to survive, but it cannot instruct them as to the program and means to be adopted.

He argues further that the role of the Holocaust in Israel, where a vibrant Jewish life is all-pervasive, cannot serve as a blueprint for its function in the American Jewish community. Here the emphasis should be upon Judaism as a highway to life and upon the Jew, not as a victim, but as a creator of civilized values, for himself and the world.

How To View History

It has generally been accepted by students of the history of ideas that a wide disparity exists between the conceptions of history of the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks.

The Biblical writers and their post-biblical successors saw it as linear, moving from creation toward its consummation in the Messianic age.

Thus, the Hebraic view served as the seed-bed for the idea of progress, which, in countless forms, both religious and secular, has become a fundamental article of faith in modern civilization, some noteworthy exceptions notwithstanding.

The Greeks, on the other hand, conceived of history as cyclical, going through several phases and then repeating the process. Among Jewish thinkers, the Biblical sage, Koheleth, is the one striking example of a thinker who, in deeply moving terms, sees the world in terms of repetitive cycles, a view which reflects the influence of Greek thought.

Without denying this widely held approach, *Howard Jacobson*, in his paper, "Visions of the Past: Jews and Greeks," presents a totally distinct interpretation. He maintains that, for the Hebrews, men and events in history were frequently seen as repeating earlier paradigms. For the Greeks, on the contrary, men and events generally were regarded as unique, without earlier parallels.

Walls Need Not Be Barriers

Words are symbols and metaphors are often the key to fundamental insights. In his paper, "The Wall of Communication," *Mordecai Roshwald* highlights the role of the wall in Jewish experience and thought and arrives at some interesting insights.

Another View of Judaism

The infinite variety of temperaments among human beings is the source of the vast disparity of outlook on the meaning and quality of life. There are similar differences with regard to the various aspects of human culture, including religion.

In his paper, "Judaism As Tragic Religion," *Bernard Och* maintains that Judaism builds upon the essential tragedy of human existence. This tragic view finds expression, he believes, in the Jewish view of human nature, on the one hand, and in the role of Israel in the world, on the other. Even those who will disagree with the author will concede that his analysis has a strong basis in the content and spirit of the Jewish tradition.

R.G.

The Divine Humor of Sholom Aleichem

On his 70th Yortsayt

EMANUEL S. GOLDSMITH

THE BASIC ATTITUDE OF TRADITIONAL Judaism towards humor is expressed in the Talmudic injunction that "it is forbidden to make fun of anything except idolatry."¹ It was the ethical earnestness, ritual strictness, other-worldliness and asceticism of the Talmud, the Midrash and later rabbinic literature which set the tone for Jewish life until modern times. Despite the fact that the Talmud and Midrash contain a few humorous attacks on super-piety and overzealousness in the interpretation of Scripture and tradition, the rabbis knew that humor could also be used against their own religious teachings and, consequently, they opposed it.²

In the Middle Ages, rabbis sought to restrict revelry on the merry festival of Purim as well as at weddings and other celebrations.³ For many centuries they also opposed the establishment of the happy *Simhat Torah* holiday as a recognized festival. The revelry permitted in the Christian world probably smacked too much of paganism for them to seek to emulate it in the Jewish community.

Medieval drama never excluded the comic from its religious ritual . . . near the season of Lent the monks used to appoint one of their number to be Lord of Unreason and chant the liturgy of Folly, during which an Ass was worshipped and the Mass parodied in a ceremony no less religious, in its profane way, than the Dionysian and Saturnalian revels of Greece and Rome.⁴

In light of this, the merry-making of the *Purim-shpielers* and of the *badkhnim* or Jewish wedding-jesters, from the middle ages to the eighteenth century, seems very tame indeed.

The emergence of Jewish humor, as we know it today, coincides with the proliferation of ideological diversity in Eastern European Jewish society, on the one hand, and with the triumph of the Yiddish language as a major written and oral medium of Jewish culture, on the other.⁵ Modern

1. *Megillah* 25b.

2. Y. Ovsay, *Ma'amarim Urshimot* (New York, 1946), p. 10.

3. Cf. Y. Lifshitz, "Badkhnim un Leytsim bay Yidn," *Arkiv far der Geshikhte fun Yidishn Teater un Drame*, ed. J. Shatzky (Vilna-New York: 1930), pp. 38-74.

4. W. Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy" in *Comedy*, ed. W. Sypher (Baltimore, 1980), p. 221.

5. Cf. B.J. Bialostotzky, *Yidisher Humor un Yidishe Leytsim* (New York, 1963), pp. 53-56.

EMANUEL S. GOLDSMITH is associate professor of Jewish Studies at Queens College, CUNY.

Jewish humor is essentially "the spiritual laughter of a people which laughed in order not to always have to cry"⁶ and is inextricably linked to the traditional Jewish way of life with its interweaving of poverty, ritualism, intellectualism, and wit.

Modern Jewish humor is an expression of the national character of the Jewish people. Its primary characteristic is the ridicule of idolatry and all man-made gods.

A Jew does not laugh simply because he loves a punchline or a trick. A Jew laughs because there resides within him the ancient irony of the Psalms which he adapts to the constantly new manifestations of paganism everywhere and of idolatry in his own communal life.⁷

Other characteristic elements of Jewish humor are the love of Torah and learning, opposition to ignorance, and a deep sense of justice which refuses to recognize differences between rich and poor. According to Aaron Zeitlin, the democratic spirit of Jewish humor is rooted in Jewish religious ethics. "It is a democratic spirit which draws sustenance from a faith which makes all persons equal not before a civil law but before the Creator of the world." A good deal of Jewish humor revolves around the eternal Jewish complaint expressed by Sholom Aleichem's Tevye, "where is God and where is justice?" "For the authentic Jew justice and God necessarily go together."⁸

Sholom Aleichem's humor is a unique phenomenon in the history of Jewish culture and a surprising mutation in the evolution of the Jewish spirit. When one takes into account that for many centuries non-religious literature was viewed as alien to Judaism and that the very reading of such literature was a sin (*bittul Torah*), the novelty of Sholom Aleichem's achievement becomes even more remarkable. While scattered examples of wit and humor may be found in the Bible, the Talmud and medieval Hebrew writings, the higher reaches of humor such as one finds in Sholom Aleichem are almost completely absent from Jewish literature before he made his appearance. Yet even he must be viewed within the context of the evolution of Judaism and the history of the Jewish people. Biblical monotheism discovered God's presence in history and the purpose of human life in ethical behavior. It held up to ridicule the meaninglessness and immorality of paganism and created a context of optimism which fostered confidence and hope for human life.

In the eighteenth century two revolutionary movements in Jewish thought prepared the ground for the flowering of Jewish humor in the years to come. Hasidism, in fostering joy as the proper mood for religious life and worship, criticized the strictness and rigidity of traditional Jewish religion. It viewed the religious leadership and accepted standards of piety with contempt and could not help but make fun of conventional reli-

6. A. Zeitlin, *Literarische und Philosophische Eseyen* (New York, 1980), p. 178.

7. Bialostotzky, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

8. Zeitlin, *Op. cit.*, p. 182.

gious standards and values. The Haskalah, or Jewish enlightenment movement, on the other hand, held both the Hasidim and their opponents up to rational scrutiny and found them wanting. Haskalah gave birth to a relatively large body of satirical writing in Hebrew and Yiddish which sought to wean Jews away from the excesses of religious tradition and the narrowness of isolation and exclusivism.

In his classical study of Sholom Aleichem, Meir Wiener characterizes the humor which enables us to transcend misfortune as a "noble, gracious way to overcome an unpleasant situation in which one finds oneself through no fault of his own." Without self-respect, purity of the spirit, and wisdom of the heart, no such humor is possible. "It soothes the pain of a perplexing, degrading situation with inner spiritual power derived from faith in the dignity of man and in the principle of justice and its ultimate victory."⁹ Even in the most hopeless of situations, such humor playfully feigns victory in order to emphasize the meaninglessness, evil, and unnaturalness of our predicament. It protects sarcastically and gives one the courage to endure. For students of literature and philosophy, this positive laughter is divine comedy.

Sholom Aleichem's writings are the highest expression of such divine comedy.

I wasn't worried about God so much, (says Tevye, the epitome of Sholom Aleichem's characters.) I could come to terms with Him one way or another. What bothered me was people. Why should people be so cruel when they could be so kind? Why should human beings bring suffering to one another as well as to themselves, when they could all live together in peace and good will?¹⁰

Sholom Aleichem's laughter is philosophical, creative, affirmative and healthful. It is provoked primarily by the discrepancy and the distance between what is and what ought to be. It helps in a rational and realistic evaluation of the world and it encourages improvement.¹¹ It is laughter that "triumphs over pain and hardship in the passion for an enduring ideal, the joy of bringing the light of happiness, of truth and beauty into a dark world."¹² It inculcates love for the Jewish people and its heritage of history, culture and religion. On the day before Yom Kippur, Sholom Aleichem tells us, we would hardly recognize Noah-Wolf the butcher. "He stops fighting with the other butchers, becomes soft as butter toward his customers, is considerate to the servant girls, becomes so unctuous you could almost spread him over a boil." He puts on his holiday garment, goes from house to house, to all his customers and neighbors, to ask for pardon for the sins he may have committed during the past year. "If any-

9. M. Wiener, *Tsu der Geshikhte fun der Yidisher Literatur in Nayntsntn Yorhundert* (New York, 1946), Vol. II, p. 287.

10. Sholom Aleichem, *Tevye's Daughters*, tr. F. Butwin (New York, 1949), p. 160.

11. Cf. J.O. Hertzler, *Laughter* (New York, 1970), p. 216.

12. J.E. Boodin, *God: A Cosmic Philosophy of Religion* (New York, 1934), p. 212.

thing I have said offended you, I want to apologize, and wish you a happy New Year.” “The same to you, Noah-Wolf,” they respond. “May God pardon us all.”¹³

Divine comedy “criticizes almost with love, and at a very high level. . . . It has judgment without criticism; laughter but above the battle, and an affirmation which is almost direct. It takes all actuality to be its province and contrasts this with the whole of the logical order. . . .”¹⁴ Where Dante’s *Divine Comedy* describes Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, Sholom Aleichem describes Kasrilevka. “His great love for the Jewish people stood by him when he accepted the challenge to complete his own ‘Divine Comedy,’” writes Jacob Glatstein. “It was not God’s laughing at his little human creatures but a Jewish ‘Divine Comedy,’ in the sense of God’s dwelling with Jews, participating day-by-day in the tragicomedy of their life.”¹⁵ Sholom Aleichem’s humor opens a window on the enduring values and traditions of the Jewish people. It possesses broad humanity and profound faith in man’s unconquerable spirit. In trying times, it sweetened the bitterness of a difficult existence. During the Holocaust, it brought comfort to the Jews locked in ghettos and annihilation camps.

The primary characters of Sholom Aleichem’s three major works — *Tevye, Menahem-Mendl* and *Mottel, the Cantor’s Son* — are humorous variations on the theme of the indefatigable optimism of the Jewish people. Mottel’s motif is “Hurrray for me! I’m an orphan!” Menahem-Mendl will not permit his constant failures at earning a livelihood to dissuade him from trying something new. Tevye, like Job of old, refuses to permit adversity to turn him from the path of faith. Unlike Job, however, Tevye is able to transcend tribulation through humor as well as through religion.

I say that the main thing is faith (proclaims Tevye). A Jew must hope. What if we work ourselves to the bone? That’s why we’re Jews. . . . As you know, I’m a great believer. I never have any complaints against the Almighty. Whatever he does is good. As Scripture says, “Trust in the Lord” — Put your faith in God and he’ll see to it that you lie six feet under, bake bagels and still thank him. . . . I say that we have a great God and a good God but, nevertheless, I say, I would like a blessing for every time God does something the likes of which should happen to our enemies.¹⁶

Sholom Aleichem’s humor is the kind of divine gift and stratagem for personal and national survival which may yet save mankind from itself. Today, the inherent decency and goodness of people is almost ignored. “Our ideological confusion presents a tremendous challenge for all idealists, creative writers, and thinkers to recognize and confront these evils with their opposites: oppression . . . with freedom . . ., lies and deceit with

13. Sholom Aleichem, *The Old Country*, tr. J. and F. Butwin (New York, 1946), p. 321.

14. J. Feibelman, *In Praise of Comedy* (New York, 1939), p. 206.

15. J. Glatstein, *Af Greyte Temes* (Tel Aviv, 1967), p. 31f.

16. Quoted in I.I. Trunk, *Tevye un Menakhem-Mendl in Yidishn Velt-Goyrl* (New York, 1944), p. 31.

truth; fanaticism with reason; terrorism with peace; arrogance . . . with humility; . . . ugliness with beauty.¹⁷

The kind of laughter that Sholom Aleichem evokes — the laughter of acceptance, friendship, sympathy and contentment — is essential to human dignity and sanity. "Laughter," writes Wylie Sypher, "is a tactic for survival, a mark of 'superior adaptation' among gregarious animals."¹⁸ Sholom Aleichem's laughter "is born out of the pure joy of living, the spontaneous expression of health and energy — the sweet laughter of the child . . . the warm laughter of the kindly soul which heartens the discouraged, gives health to the sick and comfort to the dying."¹⁹ In the Bible, Abraham is willing to sacrifice the beloved son of his old age in order to demonstrate his faith. In a Sholom Aleichem story, the "happiest man" in Kodno is the poor man who risks his life to save his dying son by throwing himself before the carriage of the physician who may be able to save him. "I would have liked to take a picture of him," writes Sholom Aleichem, "to let the whole world see what a really happy man looked like, the happiest man in Kodno."²⁰

Eric Bentley writes about receiving joy, the higher pleasure of comedy, only from an author in whom we sense joy's opposite. "The comic dramatist's starting point is misery; the joy at his destination is a superb and thrilling transcendence."²¹ Sholom Aleichem concludes his travelogue of Kasrilevka with a description of the town's two cemeteries — the old and the new. "The new one is old enough and rich enough in graves. Soon there will be no place to put anyone, especially if a pogrom should break out or any of the other misfortunes which befall us in these times." The Kasrilevites take special pride in the old cemetery both because famous people are buried in it and because it is "the only piece of land of which they are the masters, the only bit of earth they own where a blade of grass can sprout and a tree can grow and the air is fresh and one can breathe freely."²² "The secret source of humor," wrote Mark Twain, "is not joy but sorrow."²³

Five years before Sholom Aleichem's death in 1916, in a letter of consolation to friends who were mourning the death of a child, he revealed the deepest secret of his humor.

It's an ugly, evil world, (he wrote). I say to you that just to spite the world one must not cry. If you want to know, this is the true source, the real reason for my usually good mood, for my "humor," as they call it. Just to spite the world don't cry! Just to spite the world — only laugh, only laugh! . . .²⁴

17. J. Eccles and D. Robinson, *The Wonder of Being Human* (New York, 1984), p. 178.

18. Sypher, *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

19. Boodin, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

20. Sholom Aleichem, *Tevye's Daughters*, pp. 69-77.

21. E. Bentley, *The Life of Drama* (New York, 1964), p. 302.

22. Sholom Aleichem, *The Old Country*, p. 6f.

23. Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*, 1897; cf. *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*, ed. R.T. Tripp (New York, 1970), p. 293.

24. Quoted in I.D. Berkowitz, *Undzere Rishoyim* (Tel Aviv, 1966), vol. 4, p. 168.

It took many years of privation, hardship and artistic struggle for Sholom Aleichem to come to that realization. The little boy who had delighted in mimicking his elders and whose first literary work was an alphabetical list of his stepmother's curses, developed his understanding of the function of laughter and the nature of humor only gradually. Slowly he overcame the natural tendency to provoke laughter by telling jokes and pointing out the grotesque and incongruous and, instead, explored the healing powers of understanding, acceptance, and compassion. By that time he had become the Columbus of Jewish laughter and the discoverer of the power of the Jewish smile. He became the physician with an effective balm for his people's wounds, the engineer capable of tapping its hidden wellsprings of joy and comfort.

The tremendous adulation which Sholom Aleichem achieved from all segments of Yiddish-speaking Jewry during his lifetime and which continued unabated until the Holocaust, is one of the truly remarkable phenomena in the history of Jewish culture. Once, during a reading tour in Warsaw, a pious young man ran up to him on the street and kissed his hand. Although the young man belonged to a sect of Jewry for whom the reading of secular literature was a sacrilege, he could not help saying, "You are our comfort. You sweeten for us the bitterness of exile."²⁵ As early as 1908, Ba'al Makhshoves, the literary critic, began an essay with the words: "Sholom Aleichem is one of those fortunate Yiddish writers who need not wait for a literary anniversary to make their names known among the broad masses. Even before the critics took to Sholom Aleichem, he was well-known in almost every Jewish home."²⁶ S. Niger, a literary critic who took many years to warm up to Sholom Aleichem, eventually admitted that "no one thing in Jewish life affected the westernized Jew in Eastern Europe so much as these stories — except, perhaps, pogroms. Just as pogroms brought to the surface his repressed fears and tears, so Sholom Aleichem evoked his less profound but equally suppressed laughter and raillery at the world."²⁷

Sholom Aleichem seems to have rediscovered two insights of the biblical Book of Proverbs: "A joyful heart makes for good health; despondency dries up the bones" (17:22) and "If there is anxiety in a man's mind let him quash it and turn it into joy with a good word." (12:25) The traditional rendering of the last verse was "if there is anxiety in a man's mind let him talk it out of his mind." An awareness of the powers of laughter and speech was Sholom Aleichem's most important contribution to Jewish literature. But he modified these two insights in the light of East European Jewish life. Laughter was not to mock, but to encourage, and speech had to involve movements, facial expressions and vocal intonations, so

25. Quoted in *Dos Sholom Aleykhem Bukh*, ed. I.D. Berkowitz, second edition (New York, 1958), p. 355.

26. Ba'al Makhshoves, *Geklibene Verk* (New York, 1953), p. 172.

27. S. Niger, "The Gift of Sholom Aleichem," *Commentary*, (August 1946): 119.

that in his writings he includes comically detailed descriptions of facial movements and physical gestures. This technique was a major departure in Jewish writing.

Verbal play with logic is another characteristic of Sholom Aleichem's humor. His characters often sacrifice the rules of sound reasoning for considerations of humanity and kindness. They even find it impossible to conceive that their persecutors are impervious to the cause of justice and the cry of the oppressed. His "little people" "will take things for granted without warrant; they will count their chickens before they are hatched; they will commit regularly the chief fallacies known to every elementary student of logic. Rules do not appeal to them; they are creatures of the heart."²⁸

If I were Goethe, (Sholom Aleichem tells us in his autobiography), I would not describe the sorrows of young Werther, I would describe the sorrows of a poor Jewish lad who was madly in love with the cantor's daughter. If I were Heine, I would not sing of Florentine nights; I would sing of the night of *Simhat Torah*, when Jews make the rounds of *Hakafot* and when young women and pretty girls mingle with the men in the synagogue — the one night when this is permitted. The women kiss the Scroll of the Law. They jump up and down squeaking in every key. "Long life to you!" The answer is "Same to you, same to you!"²⁹

Sholom Aleichem's real artistic purpose, for all the irony and humor, was "to portray the ordinary Jew, outwardly crushed by his depressing conditions but inwardly glowing with a majestic sense of his past and his future."³⁰ On *Simhat Torah*, he tells us, even the grouchy Jew who disapproves of everything and is critical of everything is proud of his heritage. Though he be a man whom nothing can satisfy and no one can please, on this festival he too feels that it is good to be a Jew. Joyously he shouts: "Friends! I want to know, is there anything better than to be a Jew? I ask you one thing: What can be finer than to be a Jew on *Simhat Torah*?"³¹ To laugh with Sholom Aleichem is to experience the joy of Jewishness.

The natural breeding ground for responsible behavior and loyalty to mankind is the civilization and tradition into which one is born.³² The contradictions which Sholom Aleichem points out and utilizes to make us laugh are the contradictions inherent in Jewish life. At a time when Jewish life seemed threatened with extinction because of immigration, religious and cultural erosion and other factors, Sholom Aleichem's writings — which reached more Jews than those of any other author — gave a sense of reality and concreteness to a community in transition. "Is there a Jewish people in the world?" asked Y.H. Brenner, an important Hebrew

28. A.A. Roback, "Sholom Aleichem's Humor," *Congress Bi-Weekly*, vol. 26, no. 6 (March 16, 1959): 9.

29. Sholom Aleichem, *The Great Fair*, tr. T. Kahana (New York, 1955), p. 295f.

30. I. Rabinovich, *Major Trends in Modern Hebrew Fiction* (Chicago, 1968), p. 19.

31. Sholom Aleichem, *Tevey's Daughters*, p. 170.

32. Cf. L. Mumford, *The Transformations of Man* (New York, 1956), pp. 197-199.

writer, at the turn of the century. "Is there a specific character to these transports which come and go? Do these wandering groups possess an approach of their own to the world? Can they laugh and cry about life in their own way? Has the Jewish street any vital strengths, any talent for living at all? Yes indeed! The answer is affirmative because there is a Sholom Aleichem!"³³

One of Sholom Aleichem's major contributions to Yiddish literature was this conferring of an "illusion of territoriality" on the homeless Jewish people. His characters are presented in universal dimensions and bear resemblance to the non-Jewish characters of "normal" nations whom one finds in world literature. This legitimized Yiddish creative writing for a people which had hitherto sought hidden, esoteric meanings — religious, ethical, mystical, didactic, tendentious — in its writings. "Reading Sholom Aleichem, the Jew began to look at himself with a sympathetic, understanding smile as if he were viewing himself from afar. He could laugh through tears at his own misfortunes. This was indeed the liberation and redemption effecting complete transcendence — the highest achievement of belles-lettres."³⁴

To be properly understood, Sholom Aleichem's popularity must be viewed partly in terms of the position that he attained relatively early in his career as one of the three founding fathers of Yiddish literature, the two others being Mendeley Mocher Seforim and Yitzchok Leybush Peretz. These three, all of whom passed away between 1915 and 1917, played a crucial role in the emergence of modern Jewish culture and self-consciousness. They wrote when the great masses of Eastern European Jewry (which, at the time, constituted, by far, the overwhelming majority of the Jews) were emerging from their medieval status as a segregated pariah people, leaving their traditional little towns or *shtetlekh* and becoming part of Western culture. Mendeley, Sholom Aleichem and Peretz belonged to those small circles of *maskilim* or idealistic intellectuals who were at once committed to both the modernization of Jewry and the conscious preservation and furtherance of Jewish distinctiveness and identity. As East European Jews moved into the large cities of Europe and America, they took with them feelings of inadequacy which stemmed from their lack of familiarity with Gentile languages and culture and from the inferior role which Jews had traditionally been forced to play in Christian mythology. These founding fathers of Yiddish literature urged their people to step proudly into the modern world as heirs of a great culture which had much to contribute. While repudiating Jewish isolationism and cultural backwardness, they pointed with pride to the humanistic impulses of the Jewish tradition and the superiority of Jewish ethical standards. For them, the solidarity and spiritual unity of Jewry were invi-

33. Y.H. Brenner, *Kol Kitvey Y.H. Brenner*, vol. 3 (Tel Aviv, 1967), p. 106. The essay was written in 1905.

34. B. Rivkin, *Grunt-Tendentsn fun der Yidisher Literatur in Amerike* (New York, 1948), p. 14f.

olate and were to be preserved at all costs. These concerns, popularly referred to, from the early days of the Hasidic movement, as *Ahavat Yisrael*, or love of the Jewish people, constituted a modern, non-theological version of the doctrine of Jewish chosenness, albeit without overtones of chauvinism or exclusiveness.

Mendele, Sholom Aleichem and Peretz became culture-heroes who had a far greater impact on the lives of their readers than did any of the characters whom they created in their fiction. Mendele was the wise, knowledgeable Jew, rooted in the tradition but aware of new winds blowing in the Jewish community. Sholom Aleichem was the happy-go-lucky storyteller who made his readers marvel at the poor but cheerful characters of his tales and take pride in their traditional values and ideals. Peretz was the voice of Jewish humanism and the modern teacher of national ethics and Hasidic idealism.

Sholom Aleichem drew freely on the writings of Mendele for plots, characters, ambiance. He succeeded, however, in transcending the predominantly critical approach to Jewish life in many of Mendele's works by transmuting the latter's satire and irony into the language of joy and laughter. He replaced the latter's sadness and seriousness with compassion and humor. Mendele had spoken of his own writings as expressing the very core of a Jew "who, even when he does sing a merry tune, sounds from afar as if he were sobbing and weeping."³⁵ His view of Jewish life was trenchantly conveyed in the names that he chose for the three towns in which his major stories take place: Idlersville, Foolstown, and Paupersville. Sholom Aleichem, on the other hand, described the *shtetl* whose little people refused to allow poverty to depress them and the name of the town became a synonym for people who are "poor but cheerful." That town is Kasrilevka — a derivative of the Hebrew name Kasriel, meaning "crown of God."

There is a direct line from the Yiddish folk tales of the "wise men" of Chelm through Mendele's Kabtzansk or Paupersville to Sholom Aleichem's Kasrilevka or Cheerfultown. In the Chelm tales, wit dominates; in the Kabtzansk stories, satire reigns; in the Kasrilevka adventures, pathos and humor have the day. "The town into which I shall now take you, dear reader," Sholom Aleichem writes, "is exactly in the middle of that blessed Pale [of Settlement] into which Jews have been packed as closely as herring in a barrel and told to increase and multiply. The name of the town is Kasrilevka." The Pale of Settlement, the restricted area of Czarist Russia in which Jews were permitted to live, was a symbol of Jewish degradation and oppression and could hardly be called blessed. Yet, although Jews there were packed as tightly as herring in a barrel, they managed to reproduce themselves like fish in water, as if they had been commanded to do so by their enemies who instituted the Pale of Settlement and promul-

35. Mendele Mocher Seforim, *Fishke the Lame*, tr. G. Stillman (New York, 1960), p. 13.

gated other decrees against them. Or was the act of proliferation perhaps the *shtetl*-dwellers' only way of getting back at their oppressors? It is significant that the town's name is Kasrilevka — a happy name, a joyous name. "A *kasrilik* is not just an ordinary pauper, a failure in life. On the contrary, he is a man who has not allowed poverty to degrade him. He laughs at it. He is poor, but cheerful."

When a *kasrilik* finally reaches Paris and manages to visit a famous fellow Jew, he convinces Rothschild that he has brought with him something that the latter cannot buy in Paris for any amount of money: eternal life. Upon hearing how much eternal life will cost him, the banker says no more, but counts out three hundred rubles, one by one. The Kasrilevkite slips the money into his pocket, and says: "If you want to live forever, my advice to you is to leave this noisy, busy Paris and move to our town of Kasrilevka. There you can never die, because since Kasrilevka has been a town, no rich man has ever died there."³⁶

Sholom Aleichem also wrote of the Kasrilevka *melamed* or school-teacher who fantasizes about what he would do if he were Rothschild:

This is the life! No more worries about making a living. No more headaches about where the money for the Sabbath is coming from. My daughters are all married off — a load is gone from my shoulders.

After taking care of the needs of his family and his town, the *melamed* extends his philanthropic efforts to his brothers and sisters all over the world. In his daydreams, he brings an end to the persecution of his people and to wars throughout the earth.

Do you understand what I've done? I have not only put over a business deal, but people have stopped killing each other in vain, like oxen. And since there will be no more war, what do we need weapons for? The answer is that we don't. And if there are no more weapons and armies and bands and other trappings of war, there will be no more envy, no more hatred, no Turks, no Englishmen, no Frenchmen, no Gypsies, and no Jews. The face of the earth will be changed. As it is written: "Deliverance will come —" The Messiah will have arrived.³⁷

Sholom Aleichem's writings possess a strong spiritual dimension which qualifies them to be considered part of the Torah tradition of the Jewish people. Kierkegaard spoke of religious faith as beginning with a sense of "the discrepancy, the contradiction, between the infinite and the finite, the eternal and that which becomes."³⁸ He felt that "the religious individual has, as such, made the discovery of the comical in the largest measure."³⁹ In his autobiography, Sholom Aleichem describes his Uncle Pinney as an extremely observant Jew for whom

36. Sholom Aleichem, *The Old Country*, pp. 1-6.

37. Sholom Aleichem, *Tevye's Daughters*, pp. 16-19.

38. Quoted in Sypher, *Op. cit.*, p. 196f.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

another person's business, anything that smacked of communal affairs, everything that constituted helping a fellow Jew took precedence . . . he would hurry off to arrange the wedding of a poor orphan and dance all night long with her poor relatives — here surely was an opportunity to be kindly which did not often present itself. . . . The poorer the wedding, the greater the merrymaking. That is, the poorer the bride, the wilder Uncle Pinney danced. . . . Ecstasy and inspiration would illuminate his face as at prayer. The musicians would play a Jewish tune; everybody would clap to the rhythm; the circle would gradually widen; and the dancer, balancing among the burning lights, became more ecstatic and more inspired as he proceeded. . . . It was not dancing. Rather, it was a kind of divine service, a holy rite.⁴⁰

Sholom Aleichem's humor, like his Uncle Pinney's dancing, was a divine service and a holy rite. Association with others is as necessary for laughter as it is for worship. If joke-telling requires a teller, subject-matter and an audience, Sholom Aleichem's humor also requires an awareness of the presence of the God of Israel who is the subjective and objective representation of the Spirit of the Jewish people. In his will, Sholom Aleichem warned his descendants not to forsake their people or their faith and commanded them to bear with honor his hard-earned Jewish name. In the dedication of his autobiography to his children, he wrote: "Read it from time to time. Perhaps you or your children will learn something from it — to love our people and to appreciate their spiritual treasures which lie scattered in all the corners of our great Exile, in this great world."⁴¹ Sholom Aleichem's humor was suffused with a deep love for his people, committed to the alleviation of its suffering and determined to record for posterity the radiance of a way of life based on humanity and kindness. In his legacy of divine laughter the Jewish people lives. In his affirmative humor it confronts itself and, getting to know itself and its heritage with a spoonful of sugar, is forever reborn with a chuckle and a smile.

40. Sholom Aleichem, *The Great Fair*, p. 61f.

41. Sholom Aleichem, *The Great Fair*, dedication.

Jacob In Darkness (And Light): A Study In Contrasts

DAVID JEREMY ZUCKER

TEACHING RELIGION AT A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY in a predominantly non-Jewish area, one learns quickly that the assumptions of many of the students are very different from what one would find in a more Jewish-centered environment. Their focus is not only through the “spectacles” of Christianity, but, more specifically, their Biblical view is colored by the “filter” of the New Testament or sermons that they have heard. This is understandable, for it is in this manner that they have been taught about the characters in the Jewish Bible. What is also natural is that there is a parallel “filter” in the Jewish experience: the view of the rabbis in the aggadic literature. Many Jews in the modern, as in the pre-modern world, “know” episodes in the lives of Biblical figures which are simply *not* part of the actual Biblical text. On one level these rabbinic reinterpretations have added to, and developed, the character of past heroes and, so, have allowed for increased moral lessons based on the sacred texts of the past. Yet, at the same time, in some cases, as specifically with the Patriarch Jacob, the aggadic reinterpretation obscured, purposely or otherwise, an internal cohesion which linked the various episodes of this major figure's life.

An Unhappy and Dark Biography

The history of Jacob spans some twenty-five chapters, fully half of the book of Genesis. While he does not appear in each one, his influence is seen or felt time and again. Short of the overarching presence of God, no other figure so dominates the early period of the Torah. His shadow reaches into the generations that follow him.

Jacob first appears in the womb, struggling with his brother, Esau. As a young man growing up he is his mother's, not his father's, favorite son. Whether because of jealousy or cunning, at one point he convinces Esau to sell him the birthright. Some years later, tempted by the words of his mother, Rebecca, Jacob deceives his now nearly blind father, Isaac, and gets the official blessing of the first-born son. “Let people serve you, and nations bow to you, be master . . . Cursed be those who curse you, blessed be those who bless you” (Gen. 27:29). Never mind that this blessing is

DAVID JEREMY ZUCKER is Rabbi at the United Hebrew Congregations, Springfield, MO, and teaches on the faculty of Southwest Missouri State University and Drury College.

obtained fraudulently; once given it cannot be retracted. Soon thereafter Jacob, again urged by his mother, literally flees for his life, and lives in exile for twenty long years. Those years away are not easy, for, as a refugee, even if he is living with relatives, he is always under a cloud. When he finally returns to Canaan, he is not free of woes. "The biographical details of Jacob's life read like a catalogue of misfortunes."¹ His story is one of continuing conflict, often brought on by his very own hand.

From early days onward, indeed, literally throughout his life, there is a *dark side* to Jacob's personality that is reminiscent of the fatal flaws of so many characters of the Greek legends. While he is the honored Third Patriarch of Jewish Tradition, his is truly an "unhappy biography."² Indeed, his "dark side" is a particularly appropriate description, for time after time it is either in *darkness* that Jacob deceives, or *with darkness* as an ally that he carries on his cunning ways, or, alternately, he is himself deceived *through darkness*.

One cannot deny that Jacob is the "hero" of these particular narratives in Genesis, or that eventually he does (largely) triumph in his inward struggle with himself. Nonetheless, something of Jacob's darkness continues to haunt episode after episode in his life.

By way of contrast, the Midrashic Jacob most frequently is portrayed in a positive light. Reading through the aggadic literature the reader cannot but be impressed with the saintliness which the rabbinic imagination ascribed to this Patriarch.

These rabbinic passages are of particular interest for they show us the creative minds of the past ever seeking ways to reinterpret in an original manner what was clear reading of the Biblical text. The literal reading of the Torah surely caused the rabbis a great deal of soul searching.

Were the [Rabbinic] stories and legends meant to be believed literally, or are they no more than artistic or didactic embroideries on Biblical themes? No single answer can be given to these questions, . . . for the aggadah was intended primarily to draw the Jew nearer to the sacred text of Scripture by planting within his heart, through story and interpretation, a love of the personalities of the Bible, a greater realization of the nature, ways and teaching of God, and a deeper understanding of the destiny of Israel.³

The Struggles of Jacob

Like her mother-in-law Sarah, and her daughter-in-law Rachel, Rebecca has trouble conceiving a child. Only following Isaac's successful pleading with the Lord on her behalf does she find herself pregnant. It is not, however, an easy pregnancy, for "the children struggled in her womb, and she said, 'If so, why do I exist?'" (Gen. 25:22). Though the

1. Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 184.

2. Ibid.

3. David Goldstein, *Jewish Folklore and Legend*, (Hamlyn, London, New York: 1980), pp. 11, 12-13.

rabbis would see one kind of reason for all this inner activity, a more direct perusal of the Biblical text offers a different, *darker* reading. The key is found when the birth is at hand, for while Esau emerges first, Jacob is holding on to his brother's heel.

Already *in utero* Jacob is an intriguer and conniver. This notion is underscored later in the Biblical text when Esau says, "Was he, then, named Jacob that he might supplant me?" (Gen. 27:36). As Sforino comments, "*supplant me*" (in Hebrew: *ya'kveni*) is a play on the word Jacob — *Ya'akov*. Still within the darkness of his mother's womb, Jacob struggles and, indeed, under the cover of darkness he grasps his brother's heel (*a'kev*) hoping to keep him from emerging first, or at least to demonstrate that Jacob intends to win power over his twin.

How differently the rabbis saw this selfsame incident. This was a power struggle, not for wealth or position, but, rather, between good (Jacob) and evil (Esau). "Before I created you in the womb I knew you" quotes one Midrash, selecting the line from Jeremiah 1:5 as proof of Jacob's embryonic urge toward righteous living. Already in the womb Jacob struggled to come out whenever Rebecca stood near synagogues or schools, just as, by way of contrast, when she passed by pagan temples, Esau eagerly struggled to come out (*Gen. R.* 63:6). According to the rabbis, as young men, both Jacob and Esau pursued their studies, but when they came of age, Jacob went to the *bet midrash* and his brother to idolatrous shrines (*Gen. R.* 63:10).

The Birthright

The next fact that we learn in the narrative of these sons of Isaac is that Esau is a man of the outdoors, while Jacob is the one "who stayed in camp." Staying in camp (the NJPS translation) captures the notion of being the more domestically oriented of the brothers, but with E. A. Speiser's translation for those words (*yoshev ohalim*) (in the Anchor Bible Series) a different and slightly more sinister image is suggested. There we read of Jacob as the man "who kept his tents." There is a sense here of keeping secrets, keeping his own counsel, plotting, scheming, allying himself with the darkness of the tent versus the more open-field approach of brother Esau.⁴

When he returns from an unsuccessful hunt, one day, Esau comes upon Jacob cooking a stew. Though the Torah does not indicate the time of day for this encounter, logic suggests late afternoon, perhaps dusk. In the ancient world, cooking was a slow process, an all-day affair. Jacob's

4. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 193-194. Speiser was well aware of the traditional commentaries which always favored Jacob over Esau, and he notes that the "over-all contrast, then, is between the aggressive hunter and the reflective semi-nomad," yet Speiser does go on to say that, in chapter 33:1-17 "we get an altogether different picture of Jacob's older brother," clearly in the latter case one that is sympathetic to Esau (Speiser, *Op. cit.*, p. 195. cf. 260).

reluctance to part with his meal is more believable if we assume that it had taken hours to prepare. Likewise, Esau would probably have spent the day searching, albeit without success, for game. Only towards dusk does he return to the family homestead. Then, tired and irritable, ("I am famished . . . I am at the point of death") Esau seeks relief from his pangs of hunger. Having had his fill, he got up and "went his way" to retire for the night (Gen. 25:30, 32, 34). Once again, at least one can conjecture, dusk, the darkness of day, proves an ally for wily Jacob.

It is clear, however, that the same Biblical event could be interpreted in a different way. In the rabbinic mind, at the fateful encounter when Esau came in from the fields, Jacob was cooking lentils, a time-honored Jewish custom, for this was food associated with grieving. The boys' paternal grandfather, Abraham, had just died, and Jacob was preparing this appropriate mourner's meal for their father, Isaac. Esau, uncouth, unkempt and uncaring, not only lacks family feeling at this time, he even goes so far as to mock the whole theological concept of resurrection (*Gen. R.* 63:11, *Baba Batra* 16 b).

The next major "dark" event in Jacob's life is well known. At Rebecca's suggestion and with her full cooperation and collusion, Jacob takes shameless advantage of Isaac's infirmity. The old man is *blind*! Darkness again serves as a major motivating force in Jacob's life.

The legality of the verbal transfer of the birthright apparently was in question. Rebecca counsels her son actively to dupe father Isaac by bringing for him a specially cooked meal of goat's meat. Since the old man is unable to see, he will be taken in by the deception. The Torah text indicates Jacob's response. It is not one which chastises his mother for her duplicity or guile, nor does Jacob claim any moral repugnance on his own behalf. He is a willing participant and his only concern is that he will be found out and called "a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing" (Gen. 27:12).

The aggadic literature views this in a very different fashion. Again they cast the episode in positive, moral light. When Rebecca urges Jacob to receive the blessing of the first born, he is pictured agreeing to this with reluctance, as if he were at best an unwilling partner in this deception (*Gen. R.* 65:15).⁵ Indeed, there appears to be heavenly approval for this deceit, for as Rabbi Yohanan points out, one would think that the goat-skins would have a repugnant odor, but blind Isaac says, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of the field that the Lord has blessed." The good smell was from the Garden of Eden (*Gen. R.* 65:22). Were this not sufficient explanation, it had been suggested earlier that Jacob deserved the "first born blessing" for he had been the child initially conceived. In the irrefutable logic of Rabbi Yose ben Halafta, if you put two diamonds in a

5. Nehama Leibowitz offers a similar picture of a reluctant Jacob, quoting from *Haketav Vehakabbalah. Studies in Bereshit* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976), p. 265.

tube, does not the one put in first come out last? So also the first drop was that which formed Jacob (*Gen. R.* 63:8).

Jacob In Exile

Some time later, Rebecca, fearing that Esau will wreak revenge upon her favored son, urges Jacob to get out of sight and out of mind. Once again darkness touches Jacob's life. "Jacob left Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran. He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set" (*Gen.* 28:10-11). In a typical Jacob-as-schemer manner, the fugitive explains his encounter with God in a self-centered manner. He vows: "If God remains with me, if He protects me . . . and gives me bread . . . and clothing, and if I return safe to my father's house" then, and only then shall the consecrated stone become a sanctuary and I will pledge a tithe (*Gen.* 28:20-22). Indeed, this vow is made "early in the morning," no doubt in that dark time between first light and sunrise.

The statements of Jacob seem patently clear. He will continue to serve the God of his fathers *only on the condition* that he continue to receive protection during his projected journey. The response is very clear, yet the midrashic tradition once again chose to see this statement in a positive light. There the rabbis give explanations for Jacob's various conditions: "if God will keep me in the way" means from slandering, "bread to eat" indicates avoidance of adultery and so on, all virtues that the rabbis wanted to teach (*Gen. R.* 70:4, cf. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. XXXV).

The Biblical text relates that this place of Jacob's dream had previously been the site of the city of Luz. The word Luz, in a verbal form, can mean "devious, crooked, craftiness or cunning"⁶ which is a subtle underscoring of the fact that Jacob has been, and continues to be, a devious, crooked, crafty and cunning fellow.

Though the rabbis may well have been aware of the multiple meaning of Luz, Rabbi Abba ben Kahana suggested that whoever entered that area "blossomed forth into meritorious acts and good deeds like a *luz* (nut tree)" (*Gen. R.* 69:8). Again we see that the rabbinic view of Jacob is at variance with the Torah text.

When Jacob finally reaches the land of the Easterners, he finds refuge at the camp of his uncle, but, however, *he* will be the one deceived. There is an ironic twist of events to come, for when Jacob arrives at Haran it is in "broad daylight" (*Gen.* 29:7), a startling contrast to the fact that now he is to be placed in the dark — deceived — by Laban. Laban's cunning should not have shocked Jacob when he woke up the morning after having married Leah. Laban was Rebecca's brother, and certainly there existed a commonality of family traits between them, traits that Jacob seems to have inherited in generous amounts through his mother.

6. F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 531.

Darkness is essential to Laban's "putting one over" on Jacob. The wedding feast lasts well into the evening, for it was only "when evening came" (Gen. 29:23) that Laban brought Leah to Jacob, and it is, ironically, in the contrasting light of morning that the new husband sees that he has been outmanoeuvred.

There is a two-fold turn-about here. "It is not hard to see in the trickery Laban successfully practiced on Jacob in taking advantage of the darkness to substitute Leah for her sister, the retributive counterpart, measure for measure, of Jacob's exploitation of his father's perpetual darkness by masquerading as his own brother. The perpetrator of deception was now the victim, hoist with his own petard."⁷

The substitution deception motif is underscored by the fact that attention is focussed on Leah's *eyes* — which are "weak," a reminder of Isaac's blind *eyes*, and then Jacob protests with the same verb as his father had done when he says that he had been "deceived" (cf. Gen 29:25, 27:35) (*mirmah, rimitani*).

While, as noted before, the midrash generally portrays Jacob in a favorable light, in this instance the rabbis acknowledge that he had received his fair payment. "In the evening they brought her [to Jacob] and extinguished the light . . . The whole of that night he called her "Rachel" and she answered him. In the morning, however, "behold it was Leah." He said to her, "You are a deceiver and the daughter of a deceiver!" She responded, "Is there a teacher without pupils? Did not your father call you 'Esau' and you answered him. Likewise you called and I answered you!" (Gen. R. 70:19; cf. Midrash *Tanhumah, Vayeze* 11).

Darkness continues to play its part in Jacob's life. In the famous, pre-Mendelian cross-breeding experiment, he produces variations of "the streaked or wholly dark-colored animals in Laban's flock" (Gen. 30:40). This is all the more wondrous because Laban had sought to deprive Jacob by previously removing these goats and sheep and pasturing them with those of his own sons. In this case darkness is used both as a weapon against Jacob and as an ally for him. Laban and Jacob remove certain animals from the view of the other, keeping both the animals "in the dark" and the son/father-in-law, respectively, "in the dark."

Finally, when it is time for Jacob and his family to return, darkness is again present. "Jacob kept Laban the Aramean in the dark, not telling him that he was fleeing" (NJPS Gen. 31:20). While it is true that this reference is a euphemism for the literal words ("*vayignov Ya'akov et lev Lavan* — Jacob stole the heart of Laban") it captures the intent of the story and Laban protests this deception with the same phrase (Gen. 31:26). Laban, however, does not overplay his hand, for in the darkness of night God had appeared to the father-in-law warning him of attempting anything

7. Sarna, *Op. cit.*, 184.

with Jacob, good or bad. Laban even makes reference to this night encounter (Gen. 31:24, 29).

Laban's anger is not without some basis. Rachel has secretly "stolen" her father's household idols. When Jacob is accused of the theft, in his response he rashly vows that whosoever is found with that property shall die. Little does he know that in the dark of her tent Rachel is literally sitting on those idols, and his vow will be realized all too soon, for Rachel will die in childbirth, bringing forth Benjamin.

Even Jacob's being upset by Laban's false accusation is seen in the aggadic literature as an act worthy of emulation. Instead of letting the matter come to blows between them, Jacob offers up words of reconciliation, trying to appease the anger of his father-in-law (*Gen. R.* 74:10). In his explanation to Laban, Jacob mentions in passing that, at times, he lacked sleep while working for the older man. What was he doing pondered the rabbis, he was reciting Psalms (*Gen. R.* 74:11).

Jacob Returns

The next "dark" event in Jacob's life is the nocturnal episode between the Patriarch and the "man" at the ford by the river Jabok. Much has been written about this episode. Nahum Sarna describes its

unmistakably folkloristic flavor in the use of . . . the . . . motif of a demonic being whose power is restricted to the duration of the night and who is unable to abide the breaking of the dawn. An evident corollary is the opportunity afforded a brave soul to derive personal profit from the situation. He who can hold on to the demon long enough can bend him to his will. This temporal limitation upon demonic power explains the desperate crippling blow the adversary inflicted upon Jacob.⁸

Jacob, wrestling with his conscience, is turned around, he is turned inside-out, a subtle play on the sound-alike words Jabok-Jacob (y-b-k/y-'-k-v). Jacob is wrestling and, on some level, it is with his sense of guilt and foreboding. He is wrestling in the dark with the dark side of his life. In addition to whatever lingering doubts he has about his past dealings with Isaac, Esau and Laban, let alone what he can expect on the morrow, his conscience is also rightfully burdened with his latest scheme. The text in Genesis makes it quite clear that Jacob is fearful of the reception that he might expect from Esau. What does he do? In "his anxiety, he divided the people with him . . . into two camps, thinking 'If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, the other camp may yet escape!'" (Gen. 32:8-9). While that may have been prudent, that "same night he arose, and taking his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children, he crossed the ford . . . he sent across all his possessions. Jacob was left alone . . ." (Gen. 32:23-25). Jacob — husband, father, and property-owner — sends his family and possessions *before him*. Earlier he had wor-

8. *Ibid.*, 204.

ried that if Esau attacked one camp, the other might escape. Now he is placing his family in danger before himself. If they are attacked, through this latest bit of cunning he might yet get away. The dark, conniving side of Jacob is still well intact. It is only after the wrenching experience of the night encounter that Jacob has the maturity to put self-danger before that of danger to his family. At the last moment, "He himself went on ahead . . . until he was near his brother" (Gen. 33:3).

Jacob is a changed man after this wrestling, changed in name — he is now Israel; changed in physique — he now walks with a limp; and changed in mental attitude — he is now ever-more conscious of his own mortality: "I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved" (Gen. 32:31).

The day before the night-wrestling Jacob had sent messengers ahead to brother Esau. In the aggadic literature this is both condemned and praised. Some rabbis felt that this was a cowardly act on Jacob's part, for, as Esau was coming on his own, so should Jacob have gone on alone (*Gen. R.* 75:2; cf. 75:11). Yet Nehama Leibowitz quotes a midrash ably defending Jacob's actions: "Said Rabbi Jonathan: Whoever wishes to placate a king or authority and is not familiar with their ways and tactics should place this chapter . . . [Gen. 37] in front of him and learn from it the arts of appeasement and placation."⁹

Likewise, when the brothers finally meet, the rabbis ascribe base motives to Esau and a kind of heroic quality to Jacob. Do not say Esau "kissed him" but, rather, "he bit him" (*Gen. R.* 78:9, *Song of Songs R.* 7:5, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Chap. XXXVII), or at least tried to bite Jacob, for the Patriarch's neck turned to ivory (or marble) and Esau's teeth were blunted. Next to vile Esau, Jacob again is seen in a positive light. The New Testament also portrays Esau in a negative way and, by implied contrast, Jacob/Israel is a positive figure (*Hebrews* 12:16-17).

Jacob leaves and returns to Canaan in darkness, at Bethel-Luz/Peniel-Penuel (Gen. 28:19; 32:31, 32; 35:15), and in both instances there is a dramatic event in his life as well as a promise of protection for the future. Yet, for all the good that will come his way, Jacob/Israel still will be burdened, directly or indirectly, by his dark side.

Jacob in Canaan

When Jacob finally does settle in the land, he is to know little peace. Darkness will be a part of his life there, also. Chapter thirty-three ends with an ironic twist: "Jacob arrived safe in the city of Shechem" (Gen. 33:18). He is safe, but only temporarily: danger will strike, his only daughter Dinah will soon be raped — "an outrage, a thing not to be done," as the Bible explains (Gen. 34:7).

Jacob is at home, and his sons are in the field with his cattle, when he

9. Leibowitz, *Op. cit.*, 348.

hears of the offense. His response is to keep silence, to keep his counsel, to hide his feelings. Dinah's brothers seem to have learned from their father's earlier example of how to deal with people — they speak with guile to the Shechemites. It is the same word in Hebrew which was used by both Isaac and Jacob when they, in turn, had been deceived (*mirmah-rimitani*; cf. Gen. 34:13; 27:35; 29:25). Deception, delusion, darkness of purpose have now entered the third generation.

The rape episode centers on three of Jacob's children: Dinah, Simeon and Levi. It surely is not coincidental that all three are the progeny of the lesser-loved first wife Leah, for whom, as he shows plainly, Jacob has limited emotional attachment. The more he acts in a dark manner toward one part of his family, the more that action will come back to haunt him. At the end of the chapter the theme of darkness reappears. Jacob says to his sons: "You have brought trouble on me," you have darkened my reputation. In the words of the rabbis, "The vat was clear, and you have muddied it." There is much to be said for the brothers' response: "The vat *was* muddied, *we* have purified it" (*Gen. R.* 80:12).

Jacob and Joseph

Though he has grown in years and maturity, some of the deceiver/schemer remains part of Jacob's personality. Though he can take pride in a large family, he shows blatant favoritism toward Joseph, son of his beloved Rachel, presenting him with the celebrated tunic/multi-colored coat. Surely he is not unaware of the jealousy and division that he is creating among his children. Dreamer of dreams, Joseph, like his father before him, sets up a situation that will bring him future grief. His first dream (presumably dreamt in the *darkness* of the night) features sheaves in a field. The second has even darker overtones. The first one involves only the brothers; the second, set in the dark of the heavens, involves sun, moon and eleven stars, suggesting that Jacob, too, is to bow low before Joseph. Jacob's reaction is clear. He berates his son, but also ponders the meaning; he "kept the matter in mind" (Gen. 37:5-11).

Darkness will touch Jacob indirectly through Joseph, for his favored son will be thrown into a (dark) pit and, then, following the false accusation of Potiphar's wife, will find himself once more imprisoned. Surely it is not coincidental that the same word is used for both the pit and the dark dungeon (*bor* — Gen. 37:24; 41:14).

Here, too, in the Joseph drama, it is the sons of rejected Leah who play crucial roles. Reuben attempts to save his brother, but (with unconscious malice?) is unsuccessful, and Judah specifically urges the sale of Joseph to the Ishmaelite/Midianite caravan traders (Gen. 37:22, 26ff.).

Deception, keeping others in the dark, becomes a common practice with Jacob's children. They follow him as a role model. Even before the episode with Joseph and the coat, Reuben has secretly lain with his

father's concubine, Bilhah (Gen. 35:22), but Jacob holds his peace, only to revenge himself in his final words to his children when he will deny to Reuben the rights of the first born (Gen. 49:1-4).

The brothers will deceive father Jacob, but they, in turn, will be deceived by Joseph. Cunning and crafty ways continue to be a part of this family's life. And once again one sees that the rabbis try to place negative events in a more positive light. "When the sons of Jacob saw the vehemence of their father's grief, they repented of their deed, and wept bitterly . . . They arranged a great memorial service, and they wept and mourned over Joseph's death and over their father's sorrow. But Jacob refused to be comforted."¹⁰

Jacob's preference for Joseph did not go unnoticed by the rabbis. This was not a matter of selfish favoritism, they explained, but, rather, that Joseph, of all the children, most resembled his father, both physically and intellectually. Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman lists more than a dozen similarities between Jacob and Joseph, including the facts that both had only one full blood brother; there was great antagonism with his sibling(s); both were shepherds, both had special dreams and so on (*Gen. R.* 84:6). It was also said that Jacob, with his prophetic powers, saw that Joseph would "rule" in the future, and that this is why he was the preferred son (*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, XXXVIII). It is unclear whether this meant the ruling in Egypt or was a reference "to the ascendancy of the house of Joseph in Jewish history, and perhaps to the rule of the Messiah ben Joseph."¹¹

Since the transmission of knowledge was such a priority for the rabbis, it is not surprising that it is a reason given for the special relationship between father and son. Jacob was said to have taught Joseph the laws that he himself had learned from the scholars Shem and Ever (*Gen. R.* 84:8). It was this reason — the loss of tradition — that so especially grieved Jacob.

Not all the rabbis, however, saw this father-son relationship in the same way. In a comment on sibling rivalry that is as relevant today as it was when first expressed seventeen hundred years ago, Resh Lakish said in the name of Rabbi Eleazar ben 'Azariah: "A person should not make a distinction among one's children, for on account of the coat of many colors which Jacob made for Joseph 'they hated him'" (*Gen. R.* 84:8 quoting Gen. 37:4; see also *B. Shabbat* 10b).

Jacob: The Latter Years

Darkness, indeed, continues to remain a part of Jacob's life. When he learns of Joseph's (supposed) death he rends his clothes, puts sackcloth

10. Louis Ginsburg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 27, quoting *Yashar Wa-Yesheb*, 84a-85a.

11. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, trans. and annotated by Gerald Friedlander (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981), Chap. XXXVIII, p. 291, n. 5.

on his loins, mourns for his son, refuses to be comforted and says he “will go down mourning to his son in Sheol” (Gen. 37:35). Sheol is not only the term for the Biblical netherworld, it is a place of darkness and gloom.¹²

Jacob will refer to Sheol a second time some years later. When, during the drought, the brothers go to Egypt, they unknowingly encounter Joseph, who, playing out the drama, accuses them of being spies and insists that they leave one brother as hostage. They pay for the grain, leave Simeon as surety, and make their way homeward. (Again note that it is through Simeon, rejected-Leah’s son, that grief and darkness are brought upon Jacob’s head.) That very evening, in the darkness of the “night encampment,” as he is opening his sack to give feed to his ass, one of the brothers finds the very money that they had paid and, naturally, is upset. When they arrive back home, dispirited and dismayed, they report this strange event to Jacob, even as they tell him that the lord of the land has demanded that they bring Benjamin to Egypt as proof of their honesty. At this point, Jacob protests with the familiar words that, after Joseph and Simeon, should Benjamin also meet with disaster, “You would send my white head down to Sheol in grief” (Gen. 42:38). The fear of the darkness of Sheol is, on Jacob’s behalf, specifically mentioned by the brothers when they return to Egypt (Gen. 44:29, 31).

When Jacob leaves Canaan for the final time, there is once again a night-time encounter. Though it is unlike the dream at Bethel/Luz, and dissimilar from the wrestling at Peniel/Penuel, the three events are linked by God’s presence, his promise of care for the future, and the assurance that Jacob will be brought back to the ancestral homeland (Gen. 46:1-3). This nocturnal visitation is especially memorable because the name of the Patriarch is mentioned not once, but twice, a phenomenon fairly rare in the Bible (cf. Gen. 22:11; Exod. 3:4; I Samuel 3:10).

In the darkness of the winter of his years, part of the old Jacob remains, as is evidenced when he is now dim of eye. When it is time to bless Manasseh and Ephraim, Jacob consciously reverses his hands, blessing Ephraim as if he were the first-born son. Even when the act is pointed out to him, he persists in it. Is Jacob reenacting or remembering his own blessing, when he, the second son, received the blessing of the first-born from a father who could not see? This may be another act of darkness, in darkness, or, alternatively, a further example of how primogeniture was frequently not the guarantee of receiving the more abundant blessing, at least in the Patriarchal period. As has been pointed out, “Later Torah law prohibited such preferences of the younger son” (Deut. 21:15-17).¹³

The fact that Jacob (willingly? wittingly?) blesses Ephraim first and not Manasseh, was explained away by the rabbis. He was very conscious of his actions, for he was guided by a Divine Spirit (*Gen. R.* 97 — MSV). In

12. Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Op. cit.*, p. 983; cf. Job 17:13.

13. W. G. Plaut, ed., *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. 303.

sum, the need of the rabbis to portray the Patriarch Jacob as a more positive figure than is evident from the basic Torah text can be explained as their attempt to use him as a role model for moral behavior. The expansion of the literal Torah text was seen not as distortion but as development, presenting a fuller picture of the past.

Of all the characters in Genesis it was Jacob/Israel whom the rabbis wanted and needed to depict in glowing terms, for he was the contrast to Esau who represented the typical, violent and hated oppression of Rome.¹⁴ The rabbis were probably well aware of the fact that they were unfairly contrasting the two brothers, but since they could not openly criticize Rome, they fell back upon this code-language. In a time of persecution the people needed not only instruction in their religious heritage, but moral support as well. Jacob's "redemption," therefore, could be taught, expressed and understood on a variety of levels.

Time and again, the Torah pictures Jacob as a man of flesh and blood, subject to human emotions: passionate, selfish, jealous but capable of care and generosity. The aggadic literature, more often than not, presents a different Jacob, a hero, a man who is to be emulated. Here one sees that the good that men do lives after them, the evil is oft interred with their bones.¹⁵

Each generation approaches the past through its own experiences and it probably perceives what it wants, and needs, to see. The fact that the rabbis generally presented a different and more positive picture of Jacob than the Torah suggests, reflects the conditions of their days and their sense of purpose. Their light tended to obscure what was often a dreary moral pattern in Jacob's life, but that does not deny the fact that, within the Jacob narrative as presented in Genesis, there is an ongoing, brooding sense of darkness.

The book of Proverbs suggests that, as a child is reared, so will he act in later life. Certainly there is much to be said for the notion that early nurturing can have a lifelong effect. Jacob is one of the most complex personalities of the early Biblical period. In his development he grows in stature, yet his is an "unhappy biography," filled with misfortunes, often-times brought about by his own hand. On balance, nevertheless, as with his son Joseph, he learns from his past errors of judgment. The mature Jacob is not the same person as the self-centered callow youth who was so eager to promote his own position. Jacob is the God-wrestler, Israel; he is the father of the twelve tribes; he develops into the position of the revered Third Patriarch. Jacob's life is one of inner growth, of pain and strain; his is a poignant story.

14. *Midrash Rabbah Genesis*, trans. by H. Friedman (London: Soncino Press), p. 559, n. 4. Cf. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960), pp. lxxxvi, 345.

15. The correct quotation from Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar," reads "The evil that men do lives after them, The good is oft interred with their bones" (Act III.2.79).

The Downfall of King Saul: The Neurobiological Consequences of Losing Hope

HERMAN M. VAN PRAAG

I. PROLOGUE

THE LIFE OF KING SAUL IS FULL OF DRAMA.

He displays some of the most vehement of human emotions — cruelty, terror, anguish, doubt, the spirit of self-sacrifice. Here is a man caught between opposing forces, forces that he incompletely understands and insufficiently controls, forces that are partly external in origin, partly deriving from his own nature, forces that render him increasingly desperate and that, ultimately, will destroy him psychologically and physically. He seems to be a victim of a psychological deficiency disease, deficiency of hope.

His story will be re-told as a classical drama, summarized in five acts, each followed by a commentary, as was usual in drama of this type. In the second part, I will turn away from Jewish history, from human drama and pathos, from psychological processes, and consider a central question in contemporary psychiatric research. What are the consequences of losing hope, of chronic despair, for the integrity of the brain, the central apparatus for behavioral regulation? Could it be that inescapable stress alters brain function in such a way as to make behavioral adjustment progressively inadequate? While, in the first part, I dwell on the psychological consequences of hopelessness, it is the biological perspective that figures centrally in the second part.

II. THE DRAMA

Act 1

The scene is Mizpah (possibly identical with Mount Scopus, the broad ridge immediately north of Jerusalem); the time is some 1,000 odd years B.C.E. Samuel has summoned the Children of Israel because he wants to pray for them unto the Lord. And they came and “*drew water and poured it out before the Lord,*” an act of repentance and humility.

HERMAN M. VANPRAAG is professor and chairman of the department of psychiatry, Albert Einstein College/Montefiore Medical Center.

There was reason for the tribes of Israel to be frightened, to feel humble and guilt-ridden. They had sunk into gross idolatry and had just experienced a shattering defeat against the Philistines near Aphek. One hundred and fifty years after their glorious occupation of the land of Canaan they were on the verge of losing it all. They had already lost numerous people and much territory. The Philistines occupied large enclaves within Israel's domain — in the central hills, the Emek Yizreel, and in the Northern Negev.

What is more, they had lost their spiritual heritage: the Ark. In the midst of the losing battle they had asked that the Ark be brought from the national sanctuary at Shiloh to the battle field, but this morale boost had been insufficient. The Ark had fallen into Philistine hands.

Not since the time of Joshua did the tribes of Israel face so grave a military problem. Of course, they were used to attacks throughout their settling period, but those had been of a limited and local nature. An individual tribe could cope with it, or, when there was danger to all, it was a one-time threat which could be managed by the tribes unified under the temporary leadership of a judge. Now, however, the situation was different. Israel was confronted with the combined forces of a confederation of five city-states, well-armed and determined to conquer it and to subdue it. A loose organization of autonomous tribes was obviously no match for the enemy. What Israel needed was central leadership, military and political. What it also needed, demoralized as it was, was spiritual leadership.

The Children of Israel seemed to realize their needs, at least their spiritual ones. They pleaded with Samuel to cry for them unto the Lord and beg Him to save them out of the hand of the Philistines. Samuel offered them words of comfort. *"If ye do return unto the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods . . . He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."* The children of Israel repented and Samuel delivered. He spoke on behalf of the children of Israel and the Lord answered him. The men of Israel went out of Mizpah, pursued the Philistines and smote them.

Samuel's authority was now established. Israel had a leader and, seemingly, a successful one: *"The Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel; and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."*

Commentary to Act 1

Did Israel at Mizpah get what it needed? Partly. A leader was chosen who had delivered them from the enemy in a battle of miraculous proportions. He was a man who would become a revered prophet, and a respected arbiter in disputes all over the country, a man who could boast of enormous prestige. When he died, all of Israel mourned. However,

they never bestowed on him formal political or military leadership at the expense of their own autonomy.

There is reason to doubt whether Samuel's de facto secular leadership was as successful as was suggested after his intervention at Mizpah. In several subsequent verses it becomes clear that the Philistine problem was far from resolved in his lifetime, that the tribes still groaned under their aggression. "*There was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said: lest the Hebrews make them swords and spears.*" Deportation of smiths was an effective method of denying arms to a conquered people.

Did Israel at Mizpah get what it wanted? Probably. The people requested Samuel to intervene with the Lord; they didn't ask for a king. The social structure of the Hebrew tribes was basically egalitarian. The concept of a monarchical hierarchy was alien to them and acceptable only under the coercion of an imminent collective debacle. Even much later, when they had asked for and gotten a king, Saul, there was a substantial opposing minority — groups who despised him and questioned his military abilities and leadership. At Mizpah, Israel got a leader promising many benefits, demanding little sacrifices on their behalf. Israel was not yet ready for a king.

Did Samuel at Mizpah get what he wanted? Yes and no. He brought Israel back to the Lord, he boosted morale, he became the undisputed leader. There is little reason to doubt that this was what he wanted. Samuel was fortune's favorite. His mother, Channah, long childless, had promised to give him unto the Lord, all the days of his life. After weaning they brought him to Eli, the priest of Shiloh, by whom he was raised. "*He increased in favor both with the Lord, and also with men.*" Most prophets started out by refusing the mission and, once established, suffered an unrewarding, perilous and lonely way of life. Not so Samuel. "*Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord . . . and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.*"

Samuel did acquire moral leadership at Mizpah. Did he dream of more? Probably not. He denounced as apostasy the idea of a monarch. Israel had a king: the Lord. Once the earthly monarchy was demanded by the people, sanctioned by the Lord and offered to Saul, Samuel felt passed over, offended — theologically and, clearly, personally, as well. At Mizpah Samuel got what he wanted since the issue of division of power — secular and spiritual power — had not yet emerged.

Act 2

The place again is Mizpah. The time is, probably, several decades later. Samuel has called the tribes together, to present the man whom the Lord had chosen to be their king. This event meant the end of an epoch, that of the Judges, and the beginning of a new order, that of the monarchy. The elders of Israel wanted it that way. They had come to Samuel's

home in Ramah with a demand: "*there shall be a king over us, that we also be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*" They were courteous enough to give a reason: Samuel was old and his sons were not worthy to succeed him. Samuel was forthright "displeased" and he turned to the Lord. He, too, felt offended: "*they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them.*" The people's request was sinful but Samuel was told to accede to it if forewarning had shown to be of no avail. Samuel did forewarn and almost maliciously. Thus he introduced Saul: "*Ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto Him: Nay, but set a king over us.*" Thereupon, in vigorous terms, he painted the dangers of monarchy.

Then Saul was to be presented, but a tragicomical scene ensued. The people sought him, but could not find him. They turned to God and asked: "*Is there yet a man come hither?*" and the Lord answered: "*Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage.*" There he was found and the people shouted: long live the king. The ceremony was over. The installation of Israel's first king lacked luster and cogency.

Commentary to Act 2

The way in which Saul began his office must have been discouraging in the extreme. The Lord appeared to be vehemently against the move. Saul knew it and his people knew it. The Lord's prophet shared this opinion. For theological reasons? Probably so. The lines between political and religious functions had still to be drawn. Samuel feared that the appointment of a worldly authority would ultimately damage the theocratic nature of the Hebrew society.

Personal reasons as well? Resentment? I think so. It was a natural reaction of a man who, after a life of devoted service, was asked to resign his position and, at the same time, was bluntly told that his sons were unworthy to succeed him.

Samuel did not cease to confront Saul with his displeasure. After Saul's first great victory over the Ammonites, Samuel gathered the people in Gilgal to "*renew the kingdom*" — making Saul king de jure instead of de facto, but rather than praising them and their king, he re-emphasized that their wickedness was great in having asked for a king. He asked the Lord to send thunder and rain to certify his point. God did, and the people were frightened: "*Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.*"

Saul, we should realize, had not sought the honor. When he was informed that he was the king to be, he was embarrassed. "Am I not a Benjamite" (he replied) "of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribes of Benjamin?"

Actually, Saul was put under restraint from the very beginning. It

was Samuel who laid down the constitution for the new form of government. Once Saul was anointed, Samuel demanded from him absolute obedience to the Lord and his prophet.

An unwilling king, an insecure man who was put in a position of tremendous responsibility — to save his country from destruction — knowing, from the start, that he lacked favor in the Lord's eyes. Almost inevitably a human tragedy loomed on the horizon.

Act 3

The stage is the battle field at Telaim, in the south of Judah, after Saul had shattered the Amalekites. Samuel comes to visit Saul on the battlefield. To congratulate him? No, to condemn and to pass sentence. Before the battle, Samuel had ordered Saul to destroy the Amalekites utterly — the people, their king and all that they owned. Evidently the campaign had to be a definitive one and was to be undertaken without thought of material profit.

But Saul has been disobedient. He has spared their king, Agag, and the best of their cattle. When Saul sees Samuel he is frightened and tries to cover up his subordination, pretending to have performed the commandments of the Lord. But Samuel angrily asks: "*What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?*" In despair, Saul thinks of a pretext. The animals have been spared, not for self-gain, but for sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel answers in a classical statement of prophetic teaching: "*To obey is better than to sacrifice.*" Then, he passes judgment: "*Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being King.*" Saul then confesses to having transgressed the commandments of the Lord and therein exposes his weakness and insecurity. It was the people who took of the spoil; he had feared the people and harkened to their voice. He begs forgiveness, but it is not granted. Samuel walks away but Saul tries to detain him by holding his robe. In vain. In holding onto the robe, Saul tears it. Samuel turns around and repeats that the Lord has taken the kingdom of Israel from him, but now he adds: "*He hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou.*" Finally, a despairing Saul confesses to have sinned and begs for a favor. Return with me, he asks of Samuel, before my people and before Israel. Saul's appeal for his dignity and authority in the eyes of the people is granted. Samuel returned after Saul, the narrator reports, and Saul worshipped the Lord.

Samuel finished what Saul had failed to do; he killed Agag. Then he went to his home in Ramah, and Saul went to his in Gibeath-Shaul. But the breech was complete; Samuel would never see Saul again until the day of his death.

The two men had clashed previously at the battlefield in Gilgal. The tribes of Israel were waiting to start a decisive battle with the Philistines

who were very strong, bringing with them scores of chariots. The people were increasingly afraid and were simultaneously inclined to fight or to flight. To entreat God's favor, burnt-offerings had to be made. Saul had waited seven days for Samuel, "*the set time that Samuel had appointed,*" but the prophet did not arrive. Finally Saul decided to make the offerings himself and precisely then Samuel appeared (as if he had been waiting for this moment) and reacted with fury. He predicted, apparently without consultation with the Lord, what would really be effectuated years later: "*The kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath appointed him to be prince over His people because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*" This time Saul did not respond, but went to war. The signs seemed ominous. At a certain point during the battle, Saul asked counsel of God: Will you deliver the Philistines into the hand of Israel? and there was no answer. Saul carried on and won the battle.

The reluctant king has become an isolated king, an insecure man, lacking in self-worth. Rejected by the Lord and his prophet, he has little to hope for. Yet, although an identified loser, he continues his mission, the protection of Israel. His hopes must have been negligible, his courage considerable.

Commentary to Act 3

Humanly speaking, Saul has been treated unfairly. He had succeeded in checking the unhindered penetration of the central highland of Israel by the Philistines from the coastal plains and by the Amalekites from Transjordan. He probably broke the monopoly of iron of the Philistines and he set the stage for David by developing a kind of separation between secular and religious power. He was a man of conscience or else he never would have been so deeply troubled by prophetic opposition. Finally, he admitted his guilt but was refused both mercy and forgiveness. If Saul could have had the counsel of a Nathan — stern but basically sympathetic — history might have presented an altogether different picture of him.

Why was Saul treated with such immovable severity? Three sets of motives come to mind:

Religious: In the two conflicts, Saul neglected religious instruction. This, Samuel felt, threatened the very core of Israelite society, its faith. What followed was the public intimation that Saul no longer enjoyed divine approbation.

Political: Samuel might have surmised that Saul was aspiring not only to political but also to religious prerogatives.

Finally, the *psychological* factor, envy: From the beginning, Samuel was a hypercritical mentor. He became increasingly censorious and bitter after Saul's successes and the impression is inescapable that his was the

natural resentment of the aged ex-leader towards his younger and victorious successor. Divine inspiration does not preclude human shortcomings. From then on Saul had to continue his mission without divine protection, with no chance of divine assent, knowing that his successor already had been assigned but without knowing his identity. That was a situation bound to generate feelings of anger, suspicion and despondency.

Anger towards the Lord or toward Samuel? Unlikely. In his dependency and insecurity, Saul was not the type of man to challenge the Ultimate Authority.

Anger towards innocent others? Likely. If the source of anger is unapproachable, unrecognized or frightening, the emotion is easily re-channeled and someone relatively harmless is made its target.

Anger towards oneself? Possibly. Failure, even if primarily thought to be caused by external factors, easily leads to self-reproach, lowering of self-esteem and, ultimately, to self-destruction.

Suspicion? Likely to develop. Saul is forsaken by the Lord. Samuel knows that. Who else does? Who is still trustworthy, who is not? Who is his successor? Is he already around? Will he, Saul, be permitted to continue his reign? His world becomes unsafe and threatening. Another factor could have generated paranoia. Saul's aggression has been aroused, an inner state which is difficult to tolerate undiluted. In this condition one suspects others to be hostile towards oneself, thus providing a justification for one's own aggressiveness.

Feelings of despondency seem inescapable. Self-esteem and self-confidence have been shattered. Feeling abandoned by the Lord, Saul's personal defeat becomes definitive. If there is no hope, despair grows up. The human soul knows no vacuum.

Act 4

The scene is Saul's residence. Once more he has been visited by an evil spirit from the Lord. Supposedly he feels depressed, although this is nowhere explicitly mentioned in the narrative. David plays the harp to lighten his heart, but this time without success. Saul flies into a rage and casts his spear at David, who side-steps and flees. The same thing has happened before. Under the influence of an evil spirit of the Lord, Saul suddenly gets into a black temper and tries to kill David who had once found favor in his eyes.

The impact of Samuel's prophecy on Saul has been disastrous. It had touched Samuel as well: "*Samuel mourned for Saul.*" But the Lord is not moved. He repented that He had made Saul king over Israel and had no patience for Samuel's ambivalence. "*How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel.*" Samuel is summoned to go to Jesse the Beth-lehemite amongst whose sons God has provided Him-

self a king. Samuel is frightened. If Saul gets word of it he will be doomed to death, yet he goes and anoints David in the presence of his brothers.

Psychologically, the roles are now reversed: "*The spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.*" Directly afterwards, as if there had been metaphysical communication, Saul decompensates mentally for the first time. "*The spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrified him.*" David is brought in and Saul is immediately charmed and pervaded with affection. David intervenes effectively: whenever the evil spirit from God is upon Saul, David takes his harp and the evil spirit departs.

David is successful. He volunteers to fight the Philistine giant Goliath, kills him and saves the nation. When the Philistines see that their mighty man is dead — so the narrator reports — they flee and the Children of Israel despoil their camp. After this victory over Goliath, Saul reacts in an unexpected way when David is brought before him. He appears not to know him. Neither does Abner, but his ignorance is more or less explicable. David is only a recent arrival at the court and, after all, a commander-in-chief is not supposed to recognize all of the king's favorites. But what about Saul, whose relation to David had been so intimate? Historians explain the situation by assuming two versions of the first encounter between Saul and David being put in one and the same narrative. Can one conceive of a psychological explanation? Saul's reaction has been considered as a manifestation of his mental deterioration. That is unlikely, since acute memory loss in the framework of a mood- and/or- aggression disorder is extremely uncommon. I venture another interpretation. It was haughtiness fed by envy. Certainly, the victory was remarkable but who is that anonymous shepherd from Bethlehem, anyhow?

Despite this initial reaction, Saul acknowledges David's talents and sends him out on military missions where he scores one triumph after the other. Saul becomes increasingly disquieted as David's popularity increases. The women sing: "*Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.*" Saul seems to realize what is happening when he ponders that all that David is lacking is the kingdom. The chronicler adds: "*Saul eyed David from that day and forward (with envy and suspicion) . . . and was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him and was departed from Saul.*" Saul sends David into dangerous situations with the secret wish to make him fall by the hand of the Philistines. David, however, appears to be undefeatable and all Israel and Judah love him.

Saul's hatred grows — he repeatedly tries to kill David — but his affection remains. He fails while he probably could have succeeded. He orders others to kill David: Jonathan, his son, and also his servants. A senseless request. David, he knows, has become Jonathan's dearest friend, and all his servants love David. They refuse the order. Saul gives in and swears to the name of the Lord that David shall not be put to death.

These words are soon to be forgotten. After another of Saul's homici-

dal rages, David flees. The rupture between the two men is complete and Saul's behavior deteriorates further. Now David's ethics — at first beyond criticism: he remains loyal to Saul in spite of the repeated assaults — begin to deteriorate.

Saul pursues David, Michal protects him, as does Jonathan. Saul becomes enraged and casts his spear at his son. For the first time, he recognizes that the truth has dawned upon him: "*For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the earth, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom.*" David flees to Samuel, Saul finds him, but God protects him. The spirit of God comes upon Saul and he falls into a frenzy. He who was rebelling against the divine spirit was forcibly to feel its influence. David flees to Nob where he is hosted by the priest, Ahimelech. Saul is informed thereof and kills Ahimelech and all his fellow priests. David wanders through the desert. Saul becomes obsessed with David. He chases him, instead of the Philistines, but to no effect. Saul accuses his servants of conspiring against him and of being bribed by David with promises of state land and offices. Almost melodramatically he claims, "*none of you is sorry for me.*"

Endangered as he is, David, too, loses in moral judgment. He flees to the archenemies of his people, the king of Moab, the Philistine king of Gath. Erroneously and ironically the latter recognizes him as "*the king of the land.*" David, frightened, feigns madness and is let go. He surrounds himself with a small army of outlaws: "*everyone that was in distress, everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became captain over them.*" Here is overt insubordination and the seed of what could have become a civil war.

Twice David has an opportunity to kill Saul while he is sleeping, but he refrains. He, too, is torn between aversion and affection. Saul is touched by David's magnanimous conduct and weeps. "*Thou has rendered unto me good, whereas I have rendered unto thee evil*" and he seems to capitulate: "*The kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand.*" But David is not reassured and he leaves. The ugliest episode is still to come. David turns once more to the Philistines and Achish, the king of Gath, accepts him. David seeks not only refuge, but fights wars against Judah.

Then the entire Philistine force is mobilized for a decisive battle against Israel. Achish demands that David, his vassal, join him. David is saved from this fundamental decision because the other Philistine kings distrust him and he and his men are sent back to the Philistine city of Ziklag. David expresses, or at least pretends, disappointment: "*What have I done . . . that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king.*"

Meanwhile, Saul prepares desperately for what is to be his last battle. David is not on his side, but remains in Ziklag.

Commentary to Act 4

Saul's inner struggle is moving as well as frightening. He loves David, who admires him; he becomes his therapist, his commander, his son-in-

law. Saul envies David. He cannot stand his successes, the unstinted praise that is heaped upon him by the people, the love of David by his daughter, Michal, and his son, Jonathan. He cannot stand his own growing dependence on David. David's striking successes, so Saul begins to understand, can be due only to the transfer of divine blessing from himself to David. Unable to free himself from David and Samuel, from time to time Saul's rage is overshadowed by desperation.

Saul's inner struggle is frightening as well. Agreed, there was sufficient reason for distress, mistrust and envy, but in this case these reactions attain grotesque forms. Saul believes that David plans to seize his throne, that, bribed by the future king, Jonathan conspires against him, as do his servants also and the Priests of Nob. These are delusional ideas. As long as David remained at the court, he refrained from turning any situation to his own advantage, though he must have anticipated his future destiny. He could have unseated Saul, but he did not. Jonathan is loyal to David, but no less so than to Saul. The people are loyal. After Saul's death, it appears that he has had considerable support. One of his sons, Ish-Bosheth, is made king over Israel and, for several years, David reigns only over Judah. Only after the assassination of Ish-Bosheth does David attain power over both kingdoms.

Paranoid delusions feed homicidal aggression. Saul spends more time in chasing David than in pursuing the Philistine tribes. He is obsessed by David and, in the end, has objective reasons to execute him: treason. But Saul fails to do so; his pursuit is half-hearted. A really resolute, less ambivalent despot would have made shorter shrift of a dangerous rival.

The unwilling king has become totally isolated, chasing imaginary enemies rather than real ones. Deprived of divine guidance, family support, and inner resolution, there seems to be only one authority to turn to, his old mentor, Samuel.

Act 5

The scene is the house of the sorceress of En-dor, the night before the battle at Mount Gilboa.

The Philistines have mobilized and Saul is afraid and deeply disquieted at the sight of their might. He turns to the Lord but gets no answer and, in desperation, he disguises himself and goes to En-dor. There is a peculiar type of pathos in the picture of Saul reduced to having recourse to those dishonoring forms of superstition which he had tried to suppress. He requests the sorceress to put him in touch with Samuel and she succeeds. Was it a fraud, a hallucination, God's will? Samuel is displeased at being brought up. Saul says, in despair: "*I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more . . . therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I*

shall do." Samuel gives no counsel but foresees doom: the kingdom shall be given to David, the Lord will deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines, and Saul and his sons will fall.

Totally demoralized, Saul "*fell straightway his full length upon the earth, and was sore afraid . . . and there was no strength in him.*" But he pulls himself together and the next morning he goes to war. There he loses the battle, three sons, and his life. When the archers overlooked him he was in great anguish and he asked his armor-bearer to kill him lest the uncircumcised make a mock of him. The armor-bearer was afraid to do so. "*Therefore Saul took his sword, and fell upon it.*"

Commentary to Act 5

Thus ended the life of Saul, the troubled king. He is never portrayed as laughing, rejoicing, enjoying his high office. He was bowed down by it. An unwilling king, deprived of God's blessing, from the very beginning he had little to hope for. He was predestined to fail and he did, as a commander, a father, a friend, the founder of a monarchy. Worse yet, his mental powers broke down, leaving him episodically in the dark shadow of mental illness. He opposes God's judgment, but not openly; he blames David. It is David who gradually becomes the incarnation of what Saul feels to be heavenly injustice.

One sympathizes with Saul, for offense and penalty seem discordant. God and Samuel do not come off well, seeming unyielding and merciless. Samuel was aware of Saul's insecurity. "*Though thou be little in thine own sight, art thou not head of the tribes of Israel?*" Thus he reacted when, to his mind, Saul had failed. Yet Samuel was not prepared to act as Saul's counsel. Saul seems to be a victim of personal resentment.

Saul does not abdicate. He loses hope, not faith, and his deeds continue. He perseveres in the mission for which he was chosen, the protection of Israel from annihilation by the surrounding enemies. Therein lies his greatness. Though he lost favor in the eyes of the Lord of Israel, yet Saul continued to feel compassion for the Children of Israel. Disillusioned and humiliated, he managed to make self-interest subordinate to an interest of higher order — Israel's safety.

The tragedy of King Saul has classical dimensions, as I stated in the beginning. I add now: the man Saul has the dimensions of a hero, a hero in the great Jewish tradition.

III. THE BRAIN

Introduction

It is a major step from an individual human tragedy that concerns one of the most imposing members of the Household of Israel, a tragedy,

moreover, with strong religious undertones, to contemporary brain science. Yet this step has come within our reach and has actually been made.

All of us know what hope is. All of us can lose hope. The nature of what is lost differs for each individual; the process of losing hope is universal. Can behavior be disorganized by the loss of hope, by despair, by finding oneself in a situation that is unbearable but from which no escape seems possible? Can disorganization of brain functions be at the root of the behavioral disorganization? Can we reduce the risk of behavioral disorganization due to unavoidable stress via direct interference with brain functioning? These three questions have been the subject matter of modern brain and behavior research. This is the topic that I will now briefly address. Let me emphasize three points in advance:

1) I confine myself to animal work, since, so far, human data are scarce. I do not assume that animal data are pertinent for humans, but I do assume that they form intriguing incentives for studies of human pathology.

2) Animal models of despair are still rather primitive, but one should acknowledge that the brain and behavior sciences are still in their infancy.

3) For didactic reasons I will focus on only one metabolic process, in isolation, and that in a very simplified way. My approach is paradigmatic, not scholarly.

I have portrayed Saul as a victim of losing hope, of despair, and have emphasized three psychopathological phenomena: depression, paranoia, and bouts of rage. Can any one of them be imitated in animals? Paranoia cannot; disregulated aggression can, but I will refrain from discussing the topic; depression and hopelessness? Yes; animal models exist and I will focus on one of them.

Some Behavioral Consequences of Losing Hope

Imagine a dog in a so-called shuttle box, i.e., a cage divided into two parts by a barrier. On one part the grid can be electrically charged. Not so in the other part. The dog is put in the former part and undergoes traumatic electric shock. Usually, it responds by running frantically about until it accidentally scrambles over the barrier and, thus, escapes the shock. On the next trial, the dog, running and howling, crosses the barrier more quickly than before. Eventually it learns to avoid shock altogether.

Imagine now a second dog, in the same situation. This time, however, the animal is not experimentally naive, but is one that has been given previously inescapable electric shocks, shocks that he could not control, from which no escape was possible. The behavior of the second animal is usually strikingly different from that of the first one. For a short while his behavior resembles that of a naive dog: he seems panic-stricken. But soon

his behavior changes. He gives up. He stops running and sits or lies, quietly whining until shock terminates. He does not cross the barrier to escape; rather, he seems to give up resisting and to accept the shock passively. Not all dogs that have been submitted to unescapable shocks behave in that way, but approximately two-thirds of them do.

Dogs that have experienced inescapable shock demonstrate another peculiar characteristic — a learning disability. Once they have learned that “nothing I do matters,” they seem unable to learn that certain responses can bring relief, that their behavior may control trauma. Occasionally, they jump the barrier early in training and escape, but then they revert to taking the shock and appear to have learned nothing by jumping the barrier and avoiding shock. In naive dogs a successful escape is a reliable prediction of future successful escape responses. But, apparently, previous exposure to a frustrating situation without hope of escape is pervasive and supersedes later contradictory experiences.

Inability to control trauma also interferes with other types of adaptive behavior. Those animals show reduced aggression, decreased food intake and resultant weight loss, deficits in social and sexual behavior, and decreased tendency to explore new environments.

Recapitulating: the (learned) expectation that action to escape danger or pain is futile results in three major deficits:

- 1) *Motivational deficits*. “Nothing really matters, why should I bother.”
- 2) *Cognitive deficits*. “It previously went wrong, it will always be that way.”
- 3) *Emotional instability*. Fear, anxiety, and, later, apathy.

Please remember that these deficits occur only in animals subjected to uncontrollable stress, not in subjects that are exposed to identical stressors but are able to control them.

This syndrome has been described primarily by Seligman and his collaborators and has been named the “learned helplessness” syndrome. I consider “learned hopelessness” more appropriate. When one is put in a situation where one feels incapable of sustaining either physical or psychological integrity, fear and aggression usually make way for feelings of helplessness, which, in turn, let feelings of hope evaporate. Hopelessness is the basic state; helplessness is the intermediate one. The syndrome of learned hopelessness resembles human depression quite closely. We don’t know what the animals experience, but they behave as if they were depressed: demotivated, listless, withdrawn, their food intake diminishes and their sleep patterns become disturbed. It seems not to be too far-fetched to assume that the learned hopelessness syndrome is an animal model of (certain types of) depression.

Some Neurobiological Consequences of Losing Hope

What happens in the brain? That is a relevant question. Nothing in our behavior and experience changes without corresponding changes in the brain. External events do change our emotional state and behavior, but the interference is not an immediate one. The brain is the intermediary. External events influence behavior and experience via definite and, in principle, measurable changes in the functioning of the brain.

The most obvious and the most constant change in the functioning of the brain to be produced by uncontrollable stress is a change in function of brain cells by the use of noradrenaline as a neurotransmitter. Let me clarify this statement.

The brain is composed of roughly one hundred billion nerve cells, which constitute the central control and information system of the organism. Their existence is a necessary condition for mentation. Built to transport "bits of information," these nerve cells are basically composed of three elements: 1) a cell body; 2) fibres that conduct stimuli towards the cell body (dendrites); 3) an axon, i.e., a long fibre that conducts the stimulus to its next destination. Nerve cells are, however, discontinuous. A small cleft — the so-called synapse — separates the end of an axon from the next nerve cell. How, then, is the stimulus transmitted? By the release of a chemical substance. A stimulus arriving at a nerve terminal induces release of a so-called neurotransmitter in the synapse. This transmitter acts on a receptor located at the surface of the next nerve cell. The interaction of transmitter and receptor generates an impulse in that next cell, where it is propagated along its axon to the next nerve element. And so on.

The brain contains many different neurotransmitters. One of them is a substance called noradrenaline (NA). The cell bodies of the nerve cells dependent on NA as neurotransmitter are located in a small nucleus in the upper brain stem, the so-called locus coeruleus, and we know that this area plays a vital role in the response of an organism to different kinds of stressors.

What happens to NA if an animal is exposed to *controllable* stress? The activity in this neuronal system increases. More NA is utilized, more is produced. If, however, the stress is *uncontrollable*, the consequences are different. Utilization of NA is increased to such an extent that the production rate is unable to keep pace. As a result, the level of NA goes down, the transmitter is depleted and activity in the system diminishes.

Is NA depletion involved in the behavioral depression, i.e., the helplessness/hopelessness-syndrome? Yes, probably so. In a series of elegant experiments, Wurtman and his collaborators showed recently that if one prevents NA depletion the behavioral symptoms are prevented. How can we prevent such depletion? By supplying the animal with an extra amount of tyrosine, which is an amino acid and the mother substance of

NA. Animals receiving a tyrosine-enriched diet display neither the stress-induced depletion of NA nor the behavior symptoms. The conclusion seems justified that the two major effects of inescapable stress, i.e., behavioral depression and NA depletion, are related.

Finally, one may wonder what significance these animal data have for the understanding of human psychopathology. The learned hopelessness model resembles human depression, certainly. But is there more than outward resemblance? I think so, and I submit here succinctly the reasons why I do (the topic has been dealt with more elaborately in papers by Weiss and collaborators and by myself): 1) In humans, stress, unavoidable stress, frequently precedes depression. 2) Signs of disturbances of NA metabolism in the brain have been found in certain patients suffering from depression. 3) Antidepressants, drugs that are successfully used in the treatment of depression, are able to reverse the hopelessness syndrome in animals subjected to inescapable stress. And, finally, 4) most antidepressants increase the availability of NA in the brain.

I conclude that: 1) animals submitted to inescapable/uncontrollable stress develop behavioral depression while NA stores in the brain get depleted; 2) the two phenomena seem to be related; and 3) this animal model has explanatory value for human depression. The therapeutic implications of this model are obvious. Has it preventive implications as well? Could it be that prevention of NA depletion offers protection to the sometimes devastating psychological consequences of unmanageable and unbearable stress? We do not know. Not yet. But we can be assured that the matter will be studied in the very near future.

IV. EPILOGUE

I have recounted the touching story of a man, one man, chosen to be king but predestined to fail. Subsequently, I depersonalized the story. I talked about certain brain cells in general and the way that they possibly fail if an individual is chronically exposed to inescapable stress. Do I want to suggest that individual human torment is translatable, reducible to material events taking place in the brain? Absolutely not.

Human emotions, human suffering are a world in themselves. Brain cells and how they function represent a different world, a different substance. Yet, there exist interdependence, interaction. Experiences do influence the state of the brain and the state of our brain determines the way we experience. For these reasons, we are able to alleviate mental suffering, not only with psychological means, but with biological tools as well. Hence, I have dared to bring together the seemingly incompatible within the framework of one treatise.

“Everything Is In It”: Rabbinic Interpretation and Modern Literary Theory

SUSAN HANDELMAN

First I thought I was a writer. Then I realized I was a Jew. Then I no longer distinguished the writer in me from the Jew because one and the other are only torments of an ancient word.

— Edmond Jabès

Ben Bag Bag said: Turn it [the Torah] and turn it over again, for everything is in it; and look deeply into it, grow old and grey over it, and do not stir from it, for you have no better portion than this.

— Pirke Avot (*Sayings of the Fathers*) 5:21

BETWEEN BEN BAG BAG AND EDMOND Jabès, the contemporary French-Jewish poet, lie two thousand years of Jewish history, Jewish commentary, and Jewish questioning. Ben Bag Bag's advice expresses the classic rabbinic view of Torah; Edmond Jabès' writings are filled with the torment of the modern Jew seeking a way back to the ancient sources. Ben Bag Bag seems to share none of this anguish, but the sage uses an unusual verb in his statement: *hafokh*, to "turn." One might have expected him to say instead: "Learn it and learn it," or "Study and repeat it," and use the verb *l'mod*. His choice of the verb *hafokh*, I would argue, is a key to the extraordinary nature of rabbinic interpretation, to the profound ways that the rabbis opened and transformed the text of Scripture, and so created and preserved Judaism as we know it. I want to examine here some ways in which recent literary theory might help us understand what was so extraordinary about the rabbis and their interpretive genius, especially in midrash. And I want to pose the question: How does their turning and opening the Book relate to the ways in which language and texts are turned and opened in modern literary theory?

The ancient rabbis do, indeed, turn Scripture — not only as one might turn a jewel to view the way light is reflected from its different sides, but they turn it over on itself, upset its linear narrative order in seemingly outrageous ways. A classic and well-known example is the commentary on the first verse of the Bible in the midrash collection *Bereshit Rabbah*.

SUSAN HANDELMAN is associate professor of English and Jewish Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park.

R. Oshaya commenced thus: "Then I was by Him as a nursling (*amon*); and I was daily all delight" (Prov. 8:30). *Amon* means tutor; *amon* means covered; *amon* means hidden; and some say *amon* means great. *Amon* is a tutor as you read, "As an *omen* (nursing-father) carries the sucking child" (Num. 11:12). *Amon* means covered, as in the verse "*Ha-emunim* (they that were clad, i.e., covered) in scarlet" (Lam. 4:5). *Amon* means hidden, as in the verse, "And he concealed (*omen*) Hadassah" (Esther 2:7). *Amon* means great, as in the verse, "Art thou better than No-Amon?" (Neh. 3:8), which is rendered, "Art thou better than Alexandria the Great that is situated among the rivers?" Another interpretation: *amon* is a workman (*uman*). The Torah declares: "I was the working tool of the Holy One Blessed be He." In human practice, when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect, moreover, does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the doors. Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, "In the beginning God created," referring to the Torah, as in the verse, "The Lord made me as the beginning of His way" (Prov. 8:22)

The acontextual interpretation builds on the word play of *amon/uman* — nursling/workman and identifies the speaker of Proverbs as the Torah itself personified. The Torah proclaims that it was the workman/nursling of God, that is, God's instrument in creating the world, and not a simple set of narratives about events or prescriptive laws. God created "in the beginning," means *in/with* the Torah (now identified with the word "beginning") which pre-existed creation. It was with God, tutored, covered, hidden. The hiddenness of Torah, though, remains even after the Sinaitic revelation which Moses transcribed into writing; it is that divine, creative force within the words and letters opening them to a plenitude of meaning, encompassing all reality and knowing: "everything is in it." Thus Torah gives birth to, and includes, rabbinic interpretation in the Talmud, midrash, legal writings, and so forth. The question, however, is why are such ideas and claims derived in such a seemingly awkward, indirect way, through puns, "misreading," through turning and twisting language and context?

In literary terminology, turns of language are called "tropes," from the Greek word *tropus* also meaning "turn" and, consequently, "manner, style, the figurative use of a word, a figure of speech or embellishment." Some literary theorists have argued that what distinguishes literature from other forms of verbal communication is precisely that it is a language of tropes, a figurative language where words themselves are foregrounded rather than receding in the face of their objects as in practical communication or ordinary, non-literary language. Another strong trend in recent literary criticism, deconstruction, has focused on the rhetorical aspects of language and maintained that tropes are not "mere" figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, or ellipsis — simple additions or ornaments; rather, they emanate from the very generative power

of language itself. Ordinary, "literal" language, thus, is a special kind of troping, not vice versa.¹

Turning, moreover, implies movement, change, and the question since Nietzsche, Freud and the modern development of what Paul Ricoeur has called the "hermeneutics of suspicion" becomes: What desire, will, power are behind tropes? Turns, that is, are not always innocent. Literary schools such as the Russian Formalists saw literary troping as a kind of violation, or deformation of conventional language.² How, then, do turns relate to transgressions of accepted meaning? Jacques Lacan, the late French psychoanalyst, reinterpreted what Freud taught us about the nature of the unconscious and emphasized that "the unconscious is structured like a *language*" (italics mine).³ Dreams, for instance, are a language of deformation, displacement, strange turns of images and words generated from the twists of frustrated and frustrating desire. One turns to get around something.

In one sense, midrash represents a turning of Scripture over on itself to get around the historical problem of closure of the biblical canon. With the political upheavals and disasters caused by the wars with Rome in the first century, there was an urgent need finally to fix and organize canons and traditions. With the closure of canon, the oracular voice of God no longer speaks directly; prophecy is past. But moments of closing at the same time generate new modes of opening, opening by turning: the only way back or into Scripture is the way around. And, in midrash, Scripture becomes a maze of twists and turns.

Turning is also a turning back to God after one has been distant, or when the original meaning of a text has become alien. The rabbis were able to reopen the text, make it speak and have meaning after closure and catastrophe; our generation, too, has suffered closure and rupture — the closure of an era of Jewish life and belief after the Enlightenment and assimilation of Jewry into the secular world, and, of course, the catastrophe of the Holocaust. We want and need to know as well, how to reopen the Book, how to make it speak, how to hear the voice in the silence.

1. Some good introductions to deconstructive and post-structuralist literary theory are as follows: Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1982); Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982); John Sturrock, *Structuralism and Since* (New York: Oxford, 1979); Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983); Ann Jefferson and David Robey, *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction* (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1982).

2. The best account of Russian Formalism is Victor Erlich's *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981).

3. See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977). For explanations of Lacan, see John Muller and William Richardson, *Lacan Interpreted* (New York: International Universities Press, 1981) and Stuart Schneiderman, *Jacques Lacan: The Death of an Intellectual Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983).

II

Theorists of hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) often say that the problem of how to open the text is the condition of *all* interpretation.⁴ Yet, the rabbis had distinctive modes of exegesis stemming from a particular relation to language. Moreover, they asserted that their commentaries had a most special position: “Even that which a brilliant student will some day expound in front of his teacher — even that was already given at Sinai” (Jer. *Peah* 6:2). That is, the rabbis’ own interpretations, additions, turns and twists of language are part of, enfolded within, the divine revelation itself. This statement is not simply their attempt to legitimate and authorize their own interpretations; it also reflects, I would argue, profound insight into the nature of language and interpretation.

For the rabbis, in trying to come to terms with certain closures, with a distancing of the divine voice, a concealment of God in history, respond by saying that if you turn it and turn it, you will find that, too — concealment, indeterminacy — is already in the text. Where? In the very gaps and ambiguities of the divine language; and there, too, is the space of their own interpretations. So they turn the loss of center, the Temple, the cult back into Scripture itself — fold it over to enclose the loss of meaning into the text and, in doing so, they paradoxically make the text meaningful again. David Roskies describes a kind of rabbinic “sacred parody” or “counter-commentary” used to cope with anguish, and cites the following midrash:⁵

“Who is a mighty one like you, O Lord” (Ps. 89:9) [Rather one should proclaim]: “Who is like you, mighty in self-restraint?” You heard the blasphemy and insults of that wicked man [Titus] but you kept silent! In the school of Rabbi Ishmael it was taught: “Who is like you, O Lord, among the mighty (*elim*) (Exod. 15:11)? [Read rather] “Who is like you among the mute” (*ilemim*) — since He sees the suffering of His children and remains silent!” (B. *Gittin* 56b; *Mekhilla* 42b).

In a perceptive essay on midrash,⁶ James Kugel cites another extraordinary example. The rabbis are trying to explain why it is that in the alphabetical acrostic Psalm 145, where each line begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet, there is no verse which begins with the letter *nun* (“N”).

Why is there no *nun* verse in Psalm 145? Rabbi Yochanan explained that it is because Israel’s (as it were) downfall begins with that letter, as it is written, “She-has-fallen (*nafelah*) and will no more rise, the virgin of Israel” (Amos 5:2). But in the West (i.e., Palestine) the sages resolve [the problematic mes-

4. For introductions to hermeneutics see David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle: Literature, History, and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982), Roy Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982) and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976).

5. David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 30-31, 19-20.

6. James Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” *Prooftexts*, 3 (1983): 131-133.

sage of that verse by dividing it up differently] thus: “She has fallen and will (fall) no more; rise, O virgin of Israel!” Rabbi Nahman bar Isaac said: [Though David omitted the *nun*-verse because it would have invoked Israel’s downfall,] nevertheless David reconsidered and, in divine inspiration, added the next verse, “The Lord lifts up (*somekh*) all who are fallen, and straightens up all who are bent” (B. Ber. 4b).

That is, King David, the traditional author of the Psalms, somehow foresaw that, centuries later, the prophet Amos would write the terrible prophecy of the fall of Israel which would begin with the letter *nun* in the word *nafelah* (“she-has-fallen”), and so avoided using that letter. Instead, he added the very next verse which begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *somekh* (“S”) and reads, “The Lord supports all who fall,” as if David then foretold that God would lift Israel from its fall, and restore her. Moreover, the rabbis repunctuate the verse to make it mean the opposite of what it seems to say: “She has fallen and will no more rise, the virgin of Israel” to “She has fallen and will no more; rise, O virgin of Israel!”

This might appear as a somewhat outrageous interpretation; the rabbis create problems in the simple, literal meanings of the text where there don’t seem to be any, make odd and anachronistic juxtapositions of verses and seemingly forced reconciliations of them with the original text. They open up gaps to close them, and so reopen the text, make it meaningful again. They break up the flow of the narrative, atomize verses and words, fragment the canon and collapse time. They use the forces of rupture, fragmentation, disorder, so to speak, against themselves. They wrestle with the text, as did Jacob with the angel. But they, not the angel, do the wounding — the wounding of words, the turning, troping, piercing — all to wrangle the blessing from the text.

One may ask, however, how self-conscious are the rabbis when they perform these interpretive feats? Do they think of themselves as “belated interpreters” to use Harold Bloom’s words, who are caught in an Oedipal struggle with an overwhelming precursor text? Are they conscious of “violating” the plain sense of Scripture? Are these cunning strategies like those of the wily Jacob whose blessings come through disguise and trickery of his blind father Isaac? Are these strategies only a response to an historical condition?

It is difficult, of course, to answer these questions with any absolute certainty. What modern literary theory, especially “post-structuralism,” contributes to the discussion is its concept of literary language as that aspect of language which is shifting, ambiguous, multivalent, and of rhetoric and troping not as *distortions* of language but as the “normal” and essential force within it such that ordinary speaking or “plain meaning” is a tamed case, not the norm.

The rabbis, of course, were dealing with a text that they believed to be divine, and with a God who created the world through speech. Turning

and turning Scripture was, thus, somehow tapping into the very essence of that divine language itself — not distorting the text, but entering into its force, the very movement of its meaning. There is, then, an intriguing parallel between the nature of “literariness” as defined in secular literary theory and the nature of “divinity” in the divine language of the text. This parallel may help make more comprehensible what appear to be oddities of rabbinic technique, and also why the rabbis made the extraordinary assertion that their own *interpretations* were also part of *revelation*, already given at Sinai. For the turning of language on itself, into the depths of possible meaning is the point where divine and human meet, converse, wrestle. Language, Holy Scripture, mediates between human and God in the most profound way; it is where man/woman and God are entangled like the wrestling of Jacob and his angel in the night.

The turning of language over onto itself by the Jew and God creates a pocket, an enclosure where the two may be together. But this is a strange enclosure, both empty and full at once. This turning creates echoes and reverberations where words within words are elicited, where the divine voice is heard in its echoes, and is called to by its seekers. So the rabbis interpret the verse in Psalms 62:12, “Once has God spoken, twice have I heard this,” to mean, “This was in accord with the school of R. Ishmael who taught that the verse [from Jer. 23:19] ‘Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces’ means that just as the hammer splits the rock into many fragments, so one verse may be split into many meanings” (*Sanh.* 43a).

Turning, then, is also splitting, fragmenting in the sense of opening up: in midrash, one does not approach God by trying to make language transparent, straightening it out (“doing theology”) — but by hammering, twisting it around . . . opening language into itself. Perhaps, then, the divinity of language is precisely this openness wherein the Other, God as infinite and alien can enter into human discourse and existence; and yet that aspect of the text which, therefore, is always also elusive, enigmatic, always receding as much as approaching, fading as much as speaking, escaping ultimate closure. For ultimate closure would mean silence.

This openness within language, enabling the rabbis to turn it and turn it, is the opening that leads to God, an opening to the divine within language. And it is an opening into a labyrinth of mazes and turns which lead to many directions at once (some contemporary theorists might call this “intertextuality”). For the rabbis, God speaks as much by what is left “out” of the apparent plain meaning of the text as by what is put in. Perhaps that is part of their meaning when they described the primordial Torah which preceded and acted as a blueprint for the world and then was given to Moses as “made of a parchment of white fire, and written upon with black fire and sealed with fire” (*Deut. Rab.* 3:12; *Jer. Sot.* 8:22; *Jer. Shek.* 6:49d; Rashi on *Deut.* 33:2). The opening is the fire within the

letter, perhaps like the fire coming out of the burning bush but not consuming it.

For though one can turn and turn it, one cannot alter even one letter of Scripture, say the rabbis. A flaw in even one letter makes a whole Torah scroll ritually invalid. The fire in the letters is not one which consumes them, demolishes them for a higher truth. The fire, unlike Paul the apostle's "spirit," is not opposed to the letter: the letter does not kill; rather, it burns, glows with the inner life of divine language itself. There is no meaning apart from the letters — they are not transcended, but turned again and again, always remaining.

III

Yet, how far do the openings within language extend? What are the limits of interpretation? How do the rabbis keep the opening from becoming another violent rupture, a gap which cannot be breached. And how far do the insights of modern literary theory extend?

Modern literary theory is intimately involved with linguistics, and modern linguistics is often said to have begun around the turn of the century with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist. In a break with previous historical and philosophical studies, he defined language as a "system of signs." He wanted to make the study of language scientific, to construct a self-contained and autonomous study of linguistics. He argued that the value or meaning of a sign is determined not by what it *represents* (by what is "outside" language), but by its *difference* from other signs. A sign, he said, was composed of two elements, a "signifier" and a "signified," and the relation between them was *arbitrary*. There is no necessary reason why "cat" means furry animal. Moreover, the meaning of cat occurs because of the difference between signifiers — because "cat" is differentiated from "bat" and "hat" and "that." Meaning, then is a function of difference. In language, said Saussure, there are only differences with no positive terms . . . differences between signifiers and between signs. The question then arises, what are the limits of this differential process? When does the movement of difference stop and stabilize meaning? Where is there a positive identity on which we can rest?⁷

Here Saussure institutes the language/speech distinction (*langue/parole*). Language (*langue*) is the ahistorical "system," the milieu of sign relationships. To use his words, this system is one of "pure values determined by nothing outside the momentary state of its terms." "Speech" or *parole* is the actual use of language by individuals, the combinations and concrete meanings, sounds and so forth. For Saussure, though, the real object of investigation is language, *langue* — not speech, *parole*. Yet *langue* is defined by nothing outside the momentary state of its terms, and these

7. A good introduction to Saussure is Jonathan Culler, *Ferdinand deSaussure* (New York: Penguin, 1976).

terms are themselves defined by nothing positive, only by negative values, differences. Language, that is, is pure *form*, not substance. Later linguistics has criticized the language/speech opposition for different reasons (Chomsky changes the terms to competence/performance, for example). The post-structuralists maintain that *langue* is simply a heuristic fiction, no real ground at all.

Saussure's view of language is also, in a certain sense, inimical to a rabbinic view. For the rabbis, language was not arbitrary, nor did it consist of only empty formalist relations. Words and things were intimately and necessarily connected. It is commonplace to note that the Hebrew word for "word" also means "thing." In another sense, though, Saussure created a kind of secular version of the divine language. That is, in wanting to make linguistics self-contained and autonomous, Saussure adopts a displaced theological idea: the attribute of divinity as totally self-contained, self-related, autonomous. This is one reason why one can make a certain correlation between "literariness" in modern literary theory, and "divinity" in rabbinic texts. The language of God is divine, too, in being autonomous — i.e., self-reflexive, wholly immanent. Torah precedes and creates the world; the referent of the world is Torah, not vice versa. Moreover, one of the attributes of the "canonical" is completeness, self-containment: "Everything is in it." The self-reflexiveness of Scripture makes its meanings immanent: a verse in the book of Psalms is understood through the verse in the prophet Amos, for example.

In the modern era, the loss of religious belief means the loss of the divine connection between words and things, language and reality. As Frederic Jameson, citing Nietzsche, puts it, we are trapped in the "prison-house of language." "Structure," "system," "*langue*" are thus the ghostly fictions which take the place that God would have. (For the New Critics also, the text itself was invested with this divine power of autonomy, self-containment and immanent meaning. One should not confuse a work's meaning, they argued, with its historical background, the author's intentions or biography, and so forth.) Language is emptied and formalized. Yet, too, a kind of emptying out as opening up was one phase of the rabbinic enterprise as well, but generated by the sense of ultimate Otherness of the Divine. Or: perhaps one needs first to empty out in order to open up. This might be one way of understanding the Kabbalistic idea of *zimzum*: in order for the world to be created, God had first to "contract" Himself, withdraw, open a space. Similarly, say the Kabbalists, there are deeper levels of meaning to the Torah beyond its narrative stories. "Decoded," "opened," the entire Torah is composed of permutations and combinations of the names of God (see Ramban, introduction to his Torah commentary). The holiest Name of God was connected to God's essence, but ultimately beyond human knowledge, communication, and any specific meaning.

Yet, for literary theory, emptiness is *not* that Other as enigmatic

wrestling partner speaking through language. Language with a capital "L" has taken the place of God — or become a "God-term," an explanatory principle, a ground, a self-reflexive entity. Moreover, as the Bible was being desacralized by historical and critical scholarship in the nineteenth century, literature, through the efforts of critics like Matthew Arnold and others, was becoming a substitute religion and "sacralized." Writes Arnold, creeds and dogmas are now all questionable, traditions are dissolving:

The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry. . . . More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. It is literary criticism which will now teach us "the best that is known and thought in the world."⁸

Say the rabbis, "The Torah speaks in human language." In the human attempt to divinize and "divine" language, is there a strange point of intersection with the rabbis immersed in their prison-house of the text, meditating on the divine language speaking to humans? And what does it mean to say "God speaks"? Analyzing exactly what the Israelites heard at Mt. Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given, the rabbis offer different views: one opinion holds that they heard the divine voice speak directly; another holds that, in fact, they heard only the first two commandments ("I am the Lord your God" and "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me" Ex. 20:2-3) and were too overwhelmed to hear the rest. Moses received and repeated them in a human voice. Writes Maimonides, the Israelites heard the inarticulate *sound* of the divine voice, but only Moses heard the meaningful articulation of the *words* and communicated them:

. . . God spoke to Moses, and the people only heard the mighty sound, not distinct words. It is to the perception of this mighty sound that Scripture refers in the passage, "When ye hear the sound" (Deut. 5:20); again it is stated, "You heard a sound of words" (Deut. 4:12), and it is not said, "You heard words": and even when the hearing of the words is mentioned, only the perception of the sound is meant. It was only Moses that heard the words, and he reported them to the people (*Guide for the Perplexed* II:33).

The hassidic master, Mendel of Rymonov, went even further: all they really heard, he claimed, was the first letter of the first word, the "aleph" of the word *anokhi* ("I"). Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the sound produced by a simple opening of the larynx. Comments Gershom Scholem:

[The aleph is] nothing more than the possibility taken by the larynx when a word begins with a vowel. Thus the aleph may be said to denote the source of all articulate sound. The Kabbalists regarded it as the spiritual root of all other letters, encompassing in its essence the whole alphabet and hence all

8. Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," in Hazard Adams, ed., *Critical Theory Since Plato* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), p. 596.

other elements of human discourse. To hear the *aleph* is to hear next to nothing; it is the preparation for all audible language, but in itself conveys no determinate, specific meaning.⁹

Thus, writes Scholem, the Rabbi of Rymonov daringly transformed the meaning of revelation at Sinai into a “mystical revelation pregnant with infinite meaning, but without specific meaning”: only through translation into human language could it become the foundation of religious authority, making the grounds of religious authority ultimately based upon human interpretation.

It is the openness of the divine language which leads simultaneously into its secret creative depths and out toward human meaning. In Scholem’s view, too, the central problem for all mystics is that point of intersection between the divine and human languages, for “they [the mystics] have sensed an abyss, a depth in language they want to explore and master,”¹⁰ a hidden dimension beyond the use of language as instrumental communication — a place where language turns and turns upon itself.

Walter Benjamin, the great German-Jewish literary critic who died while trying to escape the Nazis, was mentor to and intimate friend of Gershom Scholem, “the friend of a lifetime,” as Scholem describes him in the epigraph dedicating his masterwork, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, to Benjamin. The two of them exerted a profound intellectual influence on each other, especially in the area of philosophy of language. In contrast to Saussure, Benjamin, in his early essays, argued that the essence of language was not a system of arbitrary signs — nor was it to be identical with any practical act of communication, or information. There is, instead, a pure language, hidden and elusive; the task of the translator is to regain this pure language, to release it:

In this pure language — which no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages — all information, all sense, and all intention finally encounter a stratum in which they are destined to be extinguished.¹¹

The essence of man’s language, writes Benjamin in his commentary on the first chapters of Genesis, is the name, and the ability to name things, and “in naming, the mental being of man communicates itself to God.” Naming is the “language of language,” and thus does man complete God’s creation. The rhythm of the act of creation in Genesis is: Let there be — He made (created) — He named. But the “absolute relation of name to knowledge exists only in God, only there is name, because it is inwardly identical with the creative word, the pure medium of knowl-

9. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 29-30.

10. Scholem, “The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah,” *Diogenes* 79 (1972): 61-62.

11. Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1978), p. 316.

edge." Human language, the names that Adam gives to the creatures, the proper name, is the "communion of man with the creative word of God," but human language ultimately falls short of the creative word of God, especially after the Fall. The knowledge of good and evil that is acquired with eating the forbidden fruit means abandoning the name as immanent knowledge for the human word as mediated — communicating something outside itself, something external. Language becomes a set of arbitrary signs, "prattle," and, therefore, a judging word causing expulsion from Eden. Language has become a means: "... in the Fall, man abandoned immediacy in the communication of the concrete, name, and fell into the abyss of the mediateness of all communication, of the word as means, of the empty word, into the abyss of prattle."¹² Thus the Tower of Babel and linguistic multiplicity.

The pure creative word is beyond ordinary communication, but is this purity, indeed, the purity of the ultimate divine Word, or the projection of an emptied modernist literary sensibility? Does a linguistic mysticism with a belief in the magic of language beyond ordinary communication, a divine potency and fullness, intersect with an ultimate emptiness as openness, a divine abyss where one might also locate the abysses faced by modern poets and critics? Or are these poets and critics committing the ultimate heresy of trying to appropriate the divine word for themselves?

In his essay on the linguistic theory of the Kabbalah, Scholem looks to the poets for the answer to the modern Jewish predicament. Tradition can no longer be handed down, he writes, and falls silent:

This, then, is the great crisis of language in which we find ourselves. We are no longer able to grasp the last summit of that mystery that once dwelt in it. The fact that language can be spoken is, in the opinion of the Kabbalists, owed to the name, which is present in language. What the value and worth of language will be — the language from which God will have withdrawn — is the question which must be posed by those who still believe they can hear the echo of the vanished word of the creation in the immanence of the world. This is a question to which, in our times, only the poets presumably have the answer. For poets do not share the doubts that most mystics have in regard to language. And poets have one link with the masters of the Kabbalah, even when they reject Kabbalistic theological formulation as being still too emphatic. This link is their belief in language as an absolute, which is as if constantly flung open by dialectics. It is their belief in the mystery of language which has to become audible.¹³

Edmond Jabès identifies the condition of the post-modern writer with that of the Jew, but one sees in his work how the "flinging open" of language can also become an extreme negativity which borders on a heretical faith:

12. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978), pp. 316, 328.

13. Scholem, "Name of God," p. 194.

"God" as the extreme Name of the Abyss. "Jew" as the figure of exile, wandering strangeness, and separation, a condition which is also that of the writer. "Book" as the impossibility of the book, or as the place and non-place of all possibility of constructing the book. "Name" as the unpronounceability of the Name as cancelling of all names, the silent Name of God, of the Invisible.

I have said that to be a Jew is to take responsibility for all books, through obsession with the single Book. I have said that the death of one Jew is the death of all the words of the book, of all the books of the unfinished Book. I have said that the Jew's will to survive is in his persistence in beginning the word anew. I have said that the Messiah was the extreme openness of the book, being the word which points to itself by that opening. I have said that the Jew, at the newest, oldest, and most risky part of his quest, was no longer a Jew to other Jews and that that paradox was one of the keys to Judaism.

Wandering Word of God. It has for its echo the word of the wandering people.

No oasis for it, no shade, no peace, only the vast and thirsty desert, only the book of this thirst, the fire that eats the fire which reduces all books to ashes at the threshold of the haunting unreadable Book which is our legacy.¹⁴

But was this, in the end, the fire and the Book for which R. Hanina ben Teradion allowed himself to be martyred by fire? The Talmud relates (*Av. Zar.* 18a) that when the Romans came to take R. Hanina to be burned to death for teaching Torah despite their prohibition of such activity, they found him in the act of reading the Torah. As they took him, his daughter began to weep, and he questioned her why. She answered, "I weep for the Torah that is to be burned with you." He answered, "The Torah is fire, and no fire can burn fire itself." They seized him and wrapped him in the scroll of the Torah, heaped faggots around him and lit the pyre. In the moment of his agony, his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, what do you see?" He replied: "I see the parchment consumed by fire, but the letters of the Scriptures are flying upwards."

14. Edmond Jabès, *Le Soupçon, le desert* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), pp. 85, 138-40, 228. See the recently published collection of essays on Jabès edited by Eric Gould, *The Sin of the Book: Edmond Jabès* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1985).

Teaching the Holocaust by Indirection

IRVING HALPERIN

FROM 1961 ONWARDS, I PUBLISHED TWO books and some fifty essays on Holocaust literature, contributed to the first textbook on the Jewish Catastrophe in Europe for Jewish secondary school students, and regularly offered a course on Holocaust literature at San Francisco State University. In the mid-seventies, I decided to stop writing and giving talks on the Holocaust. There were large gaps in my knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, and Jewish-American literature, and these could be closed only by an exclusive commitment; it would not have been possible to carry out this task while maintaining an active involvement in Holocaust studies and still have the time to meet my primary professional responsibilities as a teacher of American literature. Something else distressed me: in manuscripts and in lectures I had begun to repeat myself, to draw on weary clichés, stale prose; distressed because each word on this subject should have been forged in steel.

Still, I had not abandoned the moral obligation to remember. That obligation involuntarily went with me into the classroom and hovered there, like an intractable, commanding presence. Whatever the course, American literature from 1830 to 1900, *The Modern American Novel*, *The Short Story*, *Jewish-American Literature*, *The Craft of Fiction*, I would find myself frequently alluding to the Holocaust in the belief that even for those of us who are not survivors it is possible to understand something of the tragic past; possible for us to enter the “fiery gates,” a phrase in Elie Wiesel’s *One Generation Later* — though, admittedly, for those who were not “there” the passage through these gates is limited to no more than a few uncertain, groping steps in a realm of darkness.

My intent here is to outline some possible means for evoking the Holocaust through the reading of certain writers, even when, in some instances, the central themes and situations in their works are not at all concerned with it.

The story under consideration is William Faulkner’s “Dry September.” An innocent black man, Will Mayes, is killed by a bloodthirsty white lynch mob in a spiritually and morally desiccated small Southern town. The story hardly makes for light reading; it strikes the reader like a maledy. Geographically and historically far removed from the locales and time of the Nazi-made ghettos, deportation centers and death camps,

IRVING HALPERIN is professor of English/Creative Writing at San Francisco State University.

what possible connection might this work of fiction have to the Holocaust? Granted, the killing of this black man is a heinous crime, but it cannot, must not, be equated with the planned, systematic destruction — in our classroom discussions I insist on underscoring the historic uniqueness of the Holocaust — of six million Jews. Still, there are some elements of commonality: the killers of the Third Reich and those in “Dry September” depersonalized their victims; both the Nazis and the lynch mob destroyed Jews and black people out of cowardice, in the sense meant by Jean-Paul Sartre in “Anti-Semite and Jew”:

He [the anti-Semite] is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his liberty, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitariness, of change, of society and of the world — of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not want to admit his cowardice to himself; a murderer who represses and censures his tendency to murder without being able to hold it back . . . a malcontent who dares not revolt from fear of the consequences of his rebellion . . . He chooses the permanence and impenetrability of the warrior who obeys his leaders . . . He chooses to acquire nothing, to deserve nothing; he assumes that everything is given him as a birthright — and he is not noble . . . The Jew only serves him as a pretext; elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro or the man of yellow skin . . . Anti-Semitism, in short, is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt — anything except a man.

This statement generally elicits an immediate, strong reaction from students; they are persuaded that it is valid. The assertion that the anti-Semite “is a man who wishes to be pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt” especially reaches them, because these objective correlates powerfully suggest the anti-Semite’s internal deadness and craven fears. To be truly human, the students extrapolate from Sartre’s analysis, one has to be aware of the claims of the heart and the mind, morally responsible and compassionate. These are hardly the qualities, I like to point out parenthetically, reflected in the faces and repugnant behavior of the swastika-uniformed American Nazis who have demonstrated in the streets of this community.

After the class has scrutinized the portrayal of the racist murderers in the Faulkner story, I cite three lines from Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*:

Think of your breed, for brutish ignorance
Your mettle was not made; you were made men
To follow after knowledge and excellence.

Then I send around the class a copy of the well-known photograph of a young German cutting off the beard of an elderly Jew. The youth, clearly pleased with himself, is apparently soliciting the applause of some onlookers. After all, is he not performing an act that the Führer himself would enthusiastically approve of? And had not Himmler, in comparing Jews with vermin, declared: “Anti-Semitism is exactly the same as delousing. Getting rid of lice is not a question of ideology; it is a matter of cleanli-

ness.” See how this Jew stands before me, the smirk on the young man’s face says to the viewer. He pretends to be unafraid. Not daring to meet my eyes, he looks over my shoulder at the sky. Snip, snip, and the beard disappears. Now look — how comic! Like a shorn sheep! The young man snickers. Filled with “brutish ignorance,” he does not allow himself to feel that this man, whatever the differences in his physical appearance, dress and language from Germans, is a distinct, concrete human being. He does not even have the curiosity which would prompt him to pause and ask himself: What are the origins of the person before me? What were his parents and grandparents like? Is it possible that he is a kind and decent person — as kind and lovingly devoted to his family as my grandfather back home? But then, realistically, why would we who are looking at this photo, some four decades after it was taken, expect this loutish bully to have an open, inquiring mind about his victim, any more than the intelligent reader of “Dry September” is hardly surprised that the lynch mob surrounding its innocent victim sees him merely as a post, an inanimate object, and not a man of flesh and blood?

Now another illustration of how the Holocaust can be evoked even in a class on the craft of fiction. I say “even” because, traditionally, this course is almost exclusively concerned with the uses of narrative technique, imagery, prose style, point of view, pacing, voice, pattern, etc. in works of fiction. As one of the instructors of this course, I wish to meet the expectations that students have on enrolling for it, but during our consideration of certain stories it is impossible to shut out the specter of the Holocaust. As a case in point, I shall report on a fairly recent class which was devoted to Isaac Babel’s much acclaimed and anthologized short story, “Crossing into Poland.”

We began by noting that the stunning career of this writer was marked by a scrupulous search for the exact, the precise word or phrase that would do its work with, in Babel’s language, “ruthless speed.” We especially admired his talent for brilliant narrative strategies and ingenious verbal masks. But having covered this ground, we recognized that his preoccupation with technique was ultimately in the service of his moral concerns.

“Crossing into Poland” is a two-page story which is characteristic of Babel’s genius for brevity and conciseness. Here he dramatically renders the oppositions of an act of hideously brutal murder and the love of a Jewish daughter for her father, who was killed by pogromists. There can be no question that Babel, despite the narrator’s artfully disguised posture of chilling insouciance, is moved by the anguish of the woman. To summarize the story’s content briefly: a Red cavalry division to which the narrator is attached enters a town in eastern Poland to liberate it from the Poles. Shortly before the arrival of this Red army unit, Polish pogromists had descended upon the Jewish population. In a room of the house in which the unfeeling, obtuse narrator is billeted are a pregnant Jewish

woman, two other occupants, and the figure of a fourth person who, seemingly asleep, is entirely covered by a blanket. The narrator lies down to sleep beside the shrouded figure. Sometime later, he is awakened by the pregnant woman who, groping her fingers over his face, says, politely, "Good sir, you're calling about in your sleep and you're tossing to and fro. I'll make you a bed in another corner, for you're pushing my father about." At that point, she removes the blanket from the figure beside the narrator, who is shocked to see lying on his back a dead old man whose throat had been torn out, his face cleft in two, and his beard clotted with blue blood. Here the story ends abruptly, unexpectedly, in a searing paragraph:

"Good sir," said the Jewess, "the Poles cut out his throat, and he begging them: 'Kill me in the yard so that my daughter shan't see me die.' But they did as suited them. He passed away in this room, thinking of me. — And now I should wish to know," cried the woman with sudden and terrible violence, "I should wish to know where in the whole world you could find another father like my father?"

Not only one such father, I indicate to the class. To begin with, Isaac Babel was the father of Nathalie Babel, whose memoirs reveal profound feelings of filial devotion and loss. Because her father's writing did not confirm to Leninist-Stalinist theories of literature, he was arrested in 1939 during the purges of the intelligentsia and sent for "rehabilitation" to a Soviet labor camp, where, presumably, he died in 1941. Not only one such father but the millions of Jewish mothers and fathers who were destroyed by the Nazis. For this woman's cry cannot be confined to the temporal and geographical boundaries of the story; long after one finishes reading the last sentence, her cry continues to echo and converge with the anguish of the survivors over the loss of parents, children, relatives, friends, neighbors. Her cry calls forth images of the destroyed Jewish communities, of the faces in Roman Vishniac's monumental pictorial record of Polish Jewry, a document which painfully affects my students. Photographs of a vanished epoch, they retrieve the face of a pious-looking elderly Hasid moving through a street with four books under his arm; tailors sewing clothes; cobblers mending shoes; peddlers and their customers; rabbis and their students; a granddaughter looking with loving, anxious concern at her grandfather. The woman's cry elicits the unforgettable portrait of the narrator's father in Elie Wiesel's enduring classic, *Night*, a man with a radiantly beautiful soul who died — no, was murdered — in a Nazi concentration camp. In a larger sense, then, her cry represents the continuing sorrow of world Jewry, which, four decades later, is still mourning for the destruction of six million of its people. To hear this cry — but really to *hear* — and connect it to the Vishniac record, to Wiesel's *Night* and to other pictorial and written accounts of the Holocaust is yet another way of entering the fiery gates.

For another suggestion of how the Holocaust may be evoked

through the reading of modern fiction writers, we may look to the work of Saul Bellow. The recurrent question posed in almost all of his novels is, "How should a good man live?" In the case of *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, this question can be rephrased: After the Holocaust, how ought one to live? The main character of this novel, Artur Sammler, a 70-plus-years Cracow-born Jewish survivor is living on New York's West Side during the late 60s. A highly intelligent, elegantly mannered gentleman, formerly an established journalist, he is financially supported by his nephew, Elya Gruner, who brought Sammler and his daughter to the United States from Europe. Thirty years before arriving in New York, after having been shot by an Einsatzgruppen unit, Sammler miraculously crawled out of a mass grave in Poland and took refuge in a forest. He survived the war but suffered the loss of a wife, who died in the same mass grave from which he had escaped, as well as blindness in one eye when it was struck by a gun butt. Having experienced at first-hand a world of barbaric irrationality, Sammler has jettisoned his former romantic dreams for utopian possibilities. Still, despite his disillusionment, he clings to the belief that to maintain order and balance within the self is one of the highest achievements.

But it is hardly a climate of order and sanity that he observes in New York. Thirty years after crawling out of a mass grave, Sammler is dismayed by the melancholy spectacle of bored, confused, idle people who stridently justify their idleness and distemper. In their boredom, they frantically seek after instant stimulants and excitements, mainly through drugs, sexual promiscuity, obsessive tourism. Fleeing from the claims and responsibilities of consciousness, they burn with a fever for originality, for interesting "lifestyles." The lot of such desperately unhappy people is for Sammler — and for most of my students — a depressing illustration, writ large, of how *not* to live. Moreover, he views their wilfully self-destructive "voodoo primitivism" as being counter to the traditional Jewish emphasis on restraint, common sense, public decency, moral feeling. So he probably would have agreed that, especially for a Jew to live badly after the Holocaust is to hand Hitler, in Fackenheim's phrase, "a posthumous victory." In any event, it was not to witness such desecration and wastage of life that Sammler, a messenger from the dead, had returned to the living.

The procession of lost souls whom he angrily observes in New York, coupled with the dying and death of his nephew, Elya Gruner, plunges him into an emotional crisis from which he ultimately emerges with a clarified sense of what is fundamental and essential in human existence. In reflecting on the legacy of Gruner, a dependable, kind mensch who loved his family and provided for them and who, as a physician, generously ministered to his parents, Sammler comes to recognize that what makes one heroic, in the quiet, unobtrusive manner of his nephew, "is the strength to do one's duty daily and promptly."

In sum, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, at the risk of their distress, speaks force-

fully to receptive readers who were not "there," urging: ponder who Sammler, as representative of the survivors, is; confront the question of how, by what ethical and moral standards, should we guide ourselves in the post-Holocaust world; persist in asking searching questions, unanswerable though many of them may be, of the Jewish catastrophe in Europe. For this is one subject concerning which ignorance of, or indifference to, means spiritual death. After Auschwitz, Bellow's novel is an antidote for the unpardonable transgression: the corruption of consciousness and memory.

Icarus Too

BERNHARD FRANK

On the wings of a lie
soared toward the sun
till the wax melted
& he was undone.

By a wax puppet
is Austria run —
Beware, Herr Waldheim,
beware of the sun.

BERNHARD FRANK is *professor of English and comparative literature at State University College, Buffalo, N.Y.*

The Nativization of the Holocaust

MICHAEL BERENBAUM

Facing the Holocaust

THE HOLOCAUST HAS BECOME A SYMBOL central to the identity of American Jewry. Public occasions with Jewish content are incomplete without a required reference to it, and its memory is evoked to rally philanthropists and political activists, to challenge complacency, to undermine or fortify the Jewish establishment, to measure impending danger or bolster solidarity. The authority of the Holocaust is invoked as compelling proof for the veracity of a position. The charge that an opponent's views might encourage the repetition of genocide, or that Hitler is being granted a posthumous victory, are the ultimate epithets. Within the American Jewish community, the Holocaust has entered the domain of shared sacrality.

Perhaps a growing consciousness of the Holocaust was inevitable as the memory of the actual event receded and as those with direct memories of the war — or of the Jewish experience in Eastern Europe preceding the war — perished in the fullness of years. Only a generation more distant from the immediate catastrophe could dare to approach it. As the story of Lot's wife illustrates, a person cannot afford to look back while fleeing.

At a safer distance, however, the Holocaust cannot be avoided. Few events in Jewish history are as basic or powerful. Few are as instructive. None is as destructive or as transformative.

"By the waters of Babylon, we sat down and wept as we remembered Zion," the poet tells us. The memory of Jerusalem's destruction was undoubtedly painful, but the place from which the event was recalled inevitably shaped the memory.

Our concern is less with the event itself than with its recall, less with history than metahistory. How does the place in which a tragedy is remembered shape the collective memory? The two great centers of Jewish life — Israel and America — deal differently with the legacy of destruction, which has permeated the folk religion of each society.

To understand the identity of American Jews, one must first address their Americanism. Within the past half century, they have developed an American identity and sought confirmation of their experience — legitimation for their Jewishness — within mainstream American culture. In the 50s, Will Herberg taught that America had three religious faiths —

MICHAEL BERENBAUM is the Hymen E. Goldman lecturer in theology at Georgetown University and the former deputy director of the President's Commission on the Holocaust.

Catholic, Protestant, and Jew — and, because the American experience made room for Judaism, the suburban migration of the first generation of American Jews enhanced, rather than destroyed, Jewish institutions. Similarly, the ethnic resurgence of the 60s gave a new affirmation of Jewishness at a time when its religious foundation was eroding. Black power made assertions of Jewish solidarity more acceptable. Black studies forced the university to make room for Jewish studies, and the flourishing of Jewish studies that followed was possible only because — once university based — Jewish studies breached its ethnicity to become non-parochial and secular.¹

In the seven years between the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, the Holocaust became a central part of Jewish consciousness. In the past dozen years, there has also been a determined effort to transmit this traumatic Jewish experience to the American people as a whole and thus enhance its importance to American Jews.

Predictably, the results have been dialectical. To confirm the Holocaust as a major Jewish experience — worthy of its role within Jewish consciousness — required that it attain recognition within American culture; yet, the very act of reaching out toward a wider audience transformed the recollection and threatened its Judeo-centricity.

Attempts to introduce the Holocaust into the American experience have accelerated. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter created a Presidential Commission on the Holocaust charged with recommending a national Holocaust memorial. The Commission's origin was political — as is almost every presidential action² — and came into being because Carter and his advisors recognized the importance of the Holocaust to the American Jewish community.³ The date of Carter's announcement coincided with Prime Minister Menachem Begin's visit to Washington (in the middle of the Congressional battle over the proposed sale of F-15 bombers to Saudi Arabia) and was followed, in less than a fortnight, by the widely successful TV mini-series on the Holocaust. One thousand rabbis were invited to the initiation of the Commission.

The Commission recommended a memorial museum where the story of the Holocaust could be retold, a program of educational outreach, and national days of remembrance to be observed across the country and in Washington, D.C. where a national ceremony would feature the President and other leaders. Though it was composed primarily of Jews, the Commission made a deliberate decision to involve the greater

1. See Jacob Neusner, *The Public Side of Learning* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985) pp. 27-39.

2. Michael Berenbaum, "On the Politics of Public Commemoration of the Holocaust," in *Shoah* (Fall/Winter 1981-82): 9, 37.

3. President Jimmy Carter's advisors had deep roots in the Jewish community. The Commission was originally suggested in a memo by Mark Siegel, who later left the White House to protest the sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia. Stuart Eizenstat brought the project to Carter's attention.

American society. Intuitively, the members understood that the role of the Holocaust within Jewish consciousness would be strengthened by secular sancta.⁴

A decade ago, there were fewer than a dozen courses on the Holocaust offered in American colleges and universities, yet it is now the second most widely taught course of Judaic content — surpassed only by courses in the Hebrew Bible. The Holocaust is now taught in secondary schools throughout the country. Television programs have proliferated; Green's *Holocaust* was joined by the mini-series on Wallenberg, Hershey's *The Wall*, and Felon's *Playing for Time*. All have attracted major audiences and have served as important, if flawed, vehicles for educating the American public. In the process, however, the memory and its message would change.

The Holocaust in Israel's Civil Religion

The Holocaust has played a changing role in the civil religion of Israel as the demographic, political, and security conditions of the state evolved. Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya have argued that Israel's relationship to the Holocaust can be divided into three periods: 1948 to the Eichmann trial, the Eichmann trial to the Yom Kippur War, and the Yom Kippur War to the War in Lebanon.⁵ In the aftermath of Lebanon, Israel will undergo yet another transition with respect to its understanding of the Holocaust.

For the first thirteen years after Israel's establishment as a state, its leaders looked back on the Holocaust with fear and trembling — and, frankly speaking, with disdain. The only usable past — the only history of that period upon which they could base their future — was the heroic chapter of resistance. The fight for Jerusalem or for the Negev came to be seen as an extension of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Historians sought to recapture a tradition of resistance defined as armed struggle against an enemy whose goal was genocide. Through oral histories and interviews, Israeli scholars successfully preserved the remnant of that history, not only in Warsaw but in other ghettos, forests, and even the death camps. "Jews are fighters," was the lesson. "Given only the means, Jews have the will to exact a high price in men and materiel from the enemy."⁶ The new Israeli heroes are not diaspora leaders — neither *shtadlanim* nor collaborators — but the proud representatives of a strong, independent people — so went the story.

With the Eichmann trial a native Israeli generation was forced to confront on a daily basis the twelve-year odyssey of Jewish extermination.

4. *Report to the President: President's Commission on the Holocaust*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979).

5. Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) pp.151-153.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-107.

Attorney General Hausner began the trial by invoking Pharaoh and by reviewing three millennia of anti-Semitism, persecution, and pogroms which culminated in the Holocaust.⁷ The message was unequivocal. There could be no return to the lands of dispersion. Only a sovereign Jewish state could preserve the future.

The Passover *Haggadah* reads: "In every generation they rise against us to extinguish us." The traditional story continues, "but the Holy One, Blessed Be He, saves us from their hands." However, in the absence of a saving God, Israeli Jews turned to human means in order to protect themselves.

The perilous condition of Israel during the Yom Kippur War came as a rude psychological blow to the Israeli national élan. For seventy-two hours, the fate of the country was dependent upon gentile rulers: upon an American president, whose support for Israel was not matched by his love of Jews; upon a Secretary of Defense, who converted from Judaism; and upon the first Secretary of State of the United States who was — to use his own words — "of Jewish origin."⁸ An independent people was humbled to discover itself dependent on the good will of others in order to survive. Almost immediately, within Israel, a new understanding developed of the desperate condition of Jews during the Holocaust, coupled with a furious determination not to return to that condition.

Menachem Begin built upon this realization and constructed a usable past upon the twin pillars of anti-Semitism and the need for power. *Goyim* (literally, "the nations") hate Jews, Begin maintained. In traditional language, Esau hates Jacob. Jews are a people that dwells alone. Power is essential. Powerlessness invites victimization. Jews must determine their own morality. The world's pronouncements towards the Jews mask — sometimes more successfully and sometimes less so — their genocidal intent. The desire to make the world *Judenrein* continues, and only a fool would allow himself to be deceived.

In the aftermath of Lebanon and its miscalculations — triggered, in part, by an inability to separate the politics of the 80s from the conditions of the 40s⁹ — and with Israel's current economic dependence upon the United States, a new historical perspective can be anticipated. The questions that Israel asks of the past will change; its responses may be more complex and more confused.

Meir Kahane's unbridled hatred offers one reading of how Israel may grapple with the memory of the Holocaust. He copies the Nazis and echoes their myths. He longs for one nation, one folk. He wants to expel the aliens and make Israel *Arabrein*. Yet, however pernicious Kahane's

7. Gideon Hausner, *Justice in Jerusalem* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

8. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1978).

9. Throughout the war Begin kept calling Beirut, Berlin. Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Yaari report that Begin's basic commitment to the Christian population of Lebanon was a result of his identification with their fate.

solution, in contrast to Hitler Kahane is a great humanitarian, since he advocates expulsion with compensation — a far cry from Hitler's final solution.¹⁰ The apocalyptic messianism of Gush Emunim offers a second option that threatens to overwhelm Labor's more secular reading of history.¹¹

In short, Israel has retold the Holocaust story to mold and reinforce its national saga as it has developed over the past thirty-seven years.

The Americanization of the Holocaust

In America, another reading of history has evolved. Two examples may prove instructive. In 1983, the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors brought more than 20,000 of them to Washington for a three-day conference — the largest single sustained assembly in American Jewish history. The Gathering was convened on the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to counteract the widespread and painful perception that Jews went compliantly to their deaths — like sheep to the slaughter — and to give new meaning to the word resistance — armed and spiritual. The organizers also wanted to express their commitment to Israel and to speak to the American people.

This was not the first gathering of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Two years earlier, 5,000 people from fourteen different countries came to Jerusalem. Amid the sacred shrines of old and new Jerusalem — the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, and the Knesset Building — as well as the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz and Yad Mordecai — survivors assembled and formally transmitted their legacy to the next generation.¹²

When they met in Washington, by contrast, they were surrounded by other national shrines — the Capitol, the White House, the Washington Monument, Arlington Cemetery, the Lincoln and Vietnam Memorials. Much to the surprise of the survivors themselves, America became the dominant theme of the conference — or, at least, of the survivors' unique sense of America.

There were expressions of pride and appreciation for America, the land of opportunity and liberty. "Our adopted country has been kind to us," said one survivor from Poland, "and we, in turn, have contributed in some small way to build a strong and just society based on equality and justice for all." Another survivor said, "America embraced us when we felt rejected. America gave us the feeling of belonging when we were stateless." There were words of gratitude to America for defeating the

10. Even Kahane's slogans evoke the memory of the Holocaust.

11. See Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1984).

12. Sam Bloch, *From Holocaust to Redemption* (New York: American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, 1983).

Nazis, liberating the concentration camps, welcoming survivors, supporting Israel and establishing a national Holocaust memorial.

Of course, there were also words of bitterness and sadness as survivors recalled long lines at U.S. Consulates, quotas restricting refugees, ships turned away from American shores, gates closed to fleeing Jews and bombs dropped everywhere but at Auschwitz. For, unlike earlier immigrant generations, survivors are a reminder not only of the American dream but of America's failure to serve as a haven in the hour of greatest need.

During their three days in Washington, some survivors spoke of themselves as the embodiment of the American dream. Driven from their native lands by a tyrant, they came to America bereft of material possessions but fueled by a love of freedom. Through industry and initiative, they rebuilt their lives, raised children and grandchildren, and became an integral part of American life — adding to the rich mosaic of American culture their unique heritage of *yiddishkeit* and *menschlichkeit*. They portrayed themselves as the incarnations of the simple values that are the essence of the American experience — courage and dignity, hope and defiance.

When survivors gathered in Jerusalem, they came as pilgrims to add their experience to the Jewish national saga, to which they felt inextricably connected. When they came to Washington, they offered their experience as part of the American drama, to which they also belonged.

In 1979-81, a team of educational researchers, psychologists, historians, and sociologists worked on a study of four different Holocaust curricula — material developed by teachers and students in Great Neck, New York; Brookline, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and New York City along with the written curricula of several other cities.¹³

At that time, three debates were dominating the theological literature on the Holocaust and commemorative activities. Theologically, the Holocaust appeared as the *mysterium tremendum* — the awesome mystery — which cannot be penetrated. This insight forms the core of Emil Fackenheim's theological work and is the basis of Elie Wiesel's "Plea for the Survivors," in which he argues that the non-survivor can only approach the gates of the event and view it indistinctly from afar.

The President's Commission was engaged in a long and bitter debate concerning the uniqueness and universality of the Holocaust. Was it an unprecedented event — a universe apart from the experience of the Armenians under Turkish rule, the slaughter in Biafra, the auto-genocide of Cambodia, and the suffering of non-Jewish nationals under Nazi occupation in Eastern Europe? Were Jews the only victims of the Holocaust? How should the Holocaust be defined?

13. Mary T. Glynn, Geoffrey Bock with Karen C. Cohn, *American Youth and the Holocaust: A Study of Four Major Curricula* (New York: Zachor, 1982).

Simon Wiesenthal suggested a definition which was adopted by Carter in the formal documents of the Commission and its successor body, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council: "The Holocaust is the destruction of six million Jews and five million non-Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II."¹⁴ Yehudah Bauer, the distinguished Israeli historian, attacked the Carter/Wiesenthal definition, arguing that the Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored extermination of six million Jews as an intentional act of state undertaken in pursuit of what was considered a redemptive goal.¹⁵ Wiesel sought language that would protect the uniqueness of the Holocaust and differentiate between the Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Nazism. The Holocaust, he argued, "was the systematic, bureaucratic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War; as night descended, millions of other people were swept into this net of death."¹⁶ "While not all the victims were Jews," he wrote, "all Jews were victims." In this way, he negotiated the labyrinth between those who argued for a Judeo-centric uniqueness and the national requirement of universality imposed by the President.

To Jews in Israel and in America, the Holocaust was a source of distinctiveness, albeit a horrible one, among peoples. Christianity had provided the Nazis with the choice of the Jew as victim, and Christian teaching and institutions did not have the moral force to resist Nazism. Modernity had also failed. The political, economic, bureaucratic, and demographic trends of modern Western society set the stage for the Holocaust. If a scientifically developed, culturally advanced, and philosophically sophisticated Germany could perpetrate the Holocaust, then the West, itself, had failed.

Jews were different, a nation set apart — chosen, if not by the God of Israel, then, at least, by the enemies of that God.¹⁷

Under the circumstances, it was surprising to discover that in numerous public school systems throughout the United States, instruction in the Holocaust has become an instrument for teaching the professed values of American society: democracy, pluralism, respect for differences, individual responsibility, freedom from prejudice, and an abhorrence of racism. High school students of the Holocaust and their teachers were essentially uninterested in the debate that consumed theologians and historians.

14. This definition was expressed in the major address of President Jimmy Carter on the Holocaust and in the decision memo that led to the formation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. It is also found in the Executive Order announcing the formation of the Council.

15. Yehudah Bauer, "Whose Holocaust?" in *Midstream*, Vol. XXVI, No. 9 (November 1980): 42.

16. *Report to the President*, p. 3.

17. This position is expressed by Eliezer Berkovitz in *Faith After Auschwitz* (New York: Ktav Books, 1973).

They viewed the Holocaust as an extreme example of what can happen if the core values of American society were consistently abrogated.

All the curricula that were studied had a common methodological assumption, which negated mystery. They saw the Holocaust as a human experience — committed and endured by human beings. As such, the Holocaust could be discussed and, yes, even understood by students in grades seven through twelve.

These curricula were not used, as some had feared, to differentiate between Jews and non-Jews. Instead, they became a means of reducing barriers between students. One black student spoke of telling the story of the Holocaust in his Brooklyn neighborhood and getting the following response: “God, we thought *we* had it bad.” In Great Neck, with its large Jewish population, a study of the Holocaust reportedly sparked some of the most honest and personal discussions that the students ever had.

The question of “universalizing” the Holocaust (of comparing it to other events or removing it from an exclusively or predominantly Jewish context) pitted Jews against non-Jews in literary journals as well. In *A Double Dying*, Alvin Rosenfeld writes:

Sophie's Choice . . . is another prominent example of the tendency to universalize Auschwitz as a murderous thrust against mankind. As such, it has the effect, and no doubt the intention, of removing the Holocaust from its place within Jewish and Christian history and placing it within the generalized history of evil, for which no one in particular need be held accountable.¹⁸

Rosenfeld objects to William Styron's tendency — shared by other American writers and by the teachers interviewed in the study of Holocaust curriculum — to view the Holocaust from the perspective of their own experience, placing it in categories alien to the event but native to the American soil. In Styron's case, Stingo's encounter with the Holocaust is shaped by his early experience of racism, domination, and violence — that is, by his personal history as a sensitive Southerner growing up during the war. Styron chose Richard Rubenstein's *The Cunning of History* as his text because it approached the Holocaust from a perspective that he understood, as an expression of human slavery in the extreme — and, thus, in continuity with *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.

Norbert Samuelson has suggested that the debate may really be personal and ideological. The passion, sentimentality and fervor of Elie Wiesel have shaped his image of the Holocaust. Arthur Miller's television script, *Playing for Time*, created a character with which the secular Jewish left can identify. William Styron appropriates the Holocaust for the gentiles, and Eliezer Berkovits' work, *With God in Hell*, reclaims the Holocaust for the pious believer.

As the study of the Holocaust passes out of the ghetto and into the

18. Alvin Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1980) p. 159.

mainstream of American culture, it will inevitably be re-understood in different categories — and thus, in part, deJudaized.

In American high schools, as in Styron's work, the Holocaust was not "generalized" (not, for example, viewed as just another act of violence undifferentiated from all other); there, it was regarded as distinct — unique because its scale and content was unprecedented even though it was analyzed within a secular context.

The authors of the curricula study concluded:

As an event of this magnitude is incorporated into the American educational system, the lens through which the data is seen is necessarily an American one. The categories relate to the experience of American students throughout the country and also to their teachers. There is no way of resisting this tide, and indeed from our research, we find that the uniqueness of the Holocaust is underscored by this process of filtration and absorption. Indeed, its specialness is its own best witness, communicating itself most profoundly, most clearly and incontrovertibly.¹⁹

Optimism and the Reality of Auschwitz

Americans tend to be optimistic; the national ethos avoids the tragic or searches for a silver lining behind dark clouds. This hopeful tendency has reflected itself in the ways that Americans deal with the Holocaust intellectually. Popularizers have tended to look for *cheap grace*, for easy sources of consolation; they have sought to minimize the evil or severely to limit its implications.

Some have focused on the righteous Gentile as a source of hope. Three cases come readily to mind: one a country, the second a village, and the third an individual — Denmark, Le Chambon, and Raoul Wallenberg. Each case is powerfully consoling, each simple in its common humanity, and each has entered the domain of legend.

The Danes explain that they did nothing extraordinary; they simply treated Jews as fellow citizens facing persecution from an oppressive, occupying army. The villagers of Le Chambon were raised on a tradition of hospice; Protestants in Catholic France — themselves persecuted — they just did what they had been taught to do when young Jewish children came knocking at their doors. Wallenberg was frustrated sitting on the sidelines while the action was taking place elsewhere; he couldn't take part with the despised Nazis or continue diplomatic business as usual.

But no matter how touching these examples of humanity and heroism, righteous gentiles were numerically rare. There is an extraordinary imbalance between their accomplishment — however noble and glorious — and the needs. As we look at the landscape of Europe, complicity and cowardice were the norm. Indifference was widespread. This reality does not demean the deeds of the few, but the flicker of hope that these exceptions generated is overwhelmed by darkness.

19. Glynn, Bock and Cohn, p. 126.

Instead of pointing to religious heroes and martyrs — a Bonhoeffer, a Trochme, or a Niemöller — Christians must confront the uncomfortable fact that Church teaching allowed the Jews to be chosen as victims. Religious practice measurably influenced the behavior of the perpetrators and the response of the bystanders. There was a direct correlation between the intensity of religious practice and the percentage of Jews killed in an occupied territory. Where Christians were most devout — Poland, Slovakia, and the Baltic countries — the percentage of Jews killed increased (90% in Poland, 89% in Slovakia, 90% in the Baltic states: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia).²⁰

President Ronald Reagan also expressed this naive American optimism in his decision to visit Bitburg and in the statements that he made there and at Bergen-Belsen. He sought to narrow the scope of the Holocaust. It was proper, he thought, to pay tribute to German soldiers who were honorable men who died on the battlefield for a dishonorable cause. Once he discovered that members of the Waffen S.S. were buried at Bitburg, Reagan further narrowed the scope of evil. Waffen S.S. were acceptable — after all, many of these men were only teenage conscripts — it was the S.S. elite volunteers, according to Reagan, who were actually to blame for killing Jews.

At Bitburg, Reagan spoke as if Hitler alone were responsible for the Holocaust. According to his speech, the entire apparatus of destruction rested on the shoulders of one man as good people were led astray. Reagan conveniently overlooked the assistance that the German military gave to the S.S. Einsatzgruppen on the Russian front, not to mention the pervasiveness of Nazism within German society and the role of the S.S. in western Europe. Not to be confused by facts, Reagan minimized, personalized, and limited the evil of the Holocaust.

America's optimistic tendencies are also reflected in a more sophisticated and serious way by Terrence Des Pres' *The Survivor*. In this moving study of Holocaust survivors — and survivors of the Russian Gulag — Des Pres poignantly describes the victims' suffering and their struggle. He does not hesitate to detail graphically their anguish. Neither does he shy away from the unseemly — ruthlessness, aggressiveness, sexuality, and excremental assault. Yet, in his final chapter, on Radical Nakedness — at the lowest point of despair in the book — Des Pres detects what he terms the essence of human survival. Quoting a survivor, he states:

It wasn't the ruthlessness that enabled an individual to survive — it was an intangible quality, not particular to educated or sophisticated individuals . . . It is best described as an overriding thirst — perhaps, too, a talent for life, and a faith in life.²¹

20. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

21. Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1976) pp. 191-192.

He concludes:

Much of the behavior of survivors may thus be traced to the "biosocial" roots of human existence; and not their behavior merely, but also the extraordinary stubbornness of will which characterizes action in extremity — the furious energy of a will impersonal and stronger than hope, which in an accurate, unmetaphorical sense can only be that of life itself.²²

One cannot fail to be touched by the power of Des Pres' words and the awesome experience that he describes. Yet, as Lawrence Langer has argued,

from the perspective of the victims, who far outnumber the survivors, the disorder of meaningless death contradicts the ordering impulses of time. Those who died for nothing in the Holocaust left the living with a paralyzing dilemma of facing a perpetually present grief.²³

The Holocaust cannot be reduced to an order, to a system for survival or even to a sense of overriding meaning. It defies meaning and negates hope. The scope of victimization reduces even survival to a nullity. The reality of Auschwitz should silence the optimists.

Two modern thinkers have sought to situate the Jew outside of history. For Franz Rosenzweig, Jews gaze at eternity untainted by history. For Joseph Soloveitchik, Jews are the recipients of an archetypal divine plan unchanging in time and space. For most others, religion — like life — is organic.

Some may argue that the nativization of the Holocaust distorts the event. The Holocaust took place on the soil of Europe and to the body of the Jewish people. But only a part of memory involves the past. The past image is projected upon a screen of the present with which it interacts, and this new image, in turn, sheds light on the future. In addressing the authenticity of memory, we must examine both its source and its projection.

History reconstitutes itself in memory. Although American and Israeli Jews remember the same event as basic to their identity and even though the memory of that event forges the link between the two communities, their present reality and national sagas are so different that what is gleaned from the past for the future may increasingly diverge.

The tide of Americanization cannot easily be avoided because, in order for Israeli scholarship to move beyond its shores, it must reach out to its western brethren. For Jews to solidify the place of the Holocaust within Jewish consciousness, they must establish its importance for the American people as a whole. The process cannot be reversed for the decision has already been made. By sharing our experience with the world, we have transformed it and it, in turn, has changed us.

22. Ibid., p. 201.

23. Lawrence Langer, *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982) p. 79.

Choose Life

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

SURPRISINGLY LITTLE HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the impact of the Holocaust on the American Jewish community. David Szonyi's *The Holocaust: An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide* (1985) runs to nearly 400 pages and includes some 5,000 entries; yet, I could find no entry which dealt at length and in depth with the impact of the Holocaust on the collective unconscious and the individual consciousness of American Jews. Many have written, composed and painted their experiences and, thereby, have provided future generations with testimonies through which they will be able to approach the Holocaust. A few have consciously tried to shape the myth which will allow the voice of Auschwitz to speak clearly to future generations; but no one, as far as I know, has tried to trace and assess the collective response of the American Jewish community.

Studies of what has been written and composed will not provide the appropriate analysis. Most of the books and memoirs listed by Szonyi were written by survivors, people for whom the experience of the Holocaust was direct and immediate. To the survivor community the Holocaust is always present. This is not the situation for America's Jews who learned of the death camps only in 1942. The ovens at Auschwitz were shut down by Allied soldiers the day before the first photographs of that horror appeared in our newspapers. To most American Jews, the Holocaust is not experience but history, a shadow which darkens the spirit, whose impact on our lives is real but the result of empathy rather than of direct experience.

Impact studies are difficult. Tracing changes in Jewish attitudes by statistical methods has not yet matured as a discipline. Impact studies are also inhibited by an understandable concern that such an approach might seem to demean the reality of Auschwitz. What those who were not there make of the Holocaust, inevitably, will reflect their needs and perceptions, their use of that history, rather than the overwhelming event itself.

Our generation still includes survivors and I, as an American Jew, have felt it best to leave writing about the Holocaust to those who experienced it. I know the Holocaust secondhand from what I have read, heard from survivors or seen on dated newsreel film. I also know how time and circumstance color the meaning of an event. When I discuss the Holo-

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER is rabbi of *The Temple* in Cleveland, Ohio and adjunct professor of religion at Case Western Reserve University.

caust with the twenty-year olds in my university classes, I face young people who have experienced the camps only as memorials visited by tourists. These students can neither experience the event in its original, unmediated power as the prisoners did, nor can they respond to it with immediacy as I did on the day when I first saw those nightmare pictures of ovens and corpses. Auschwitz, for them, is part of the long Jewish past.

American Jewry's, indeed, world Jewry's, first response to the Holocaust was a deafening silence. We had trouble believing the evidence which was there for all to see. No one had a frame of reference which could assimilate assembly-line genocide. People were war-weary. Most wanted to believe that the horrid past was dead and buried, never to be resurrected. Sanity and common sense suggested that we think ahead rather than think about. It was a time for rebuilding, to get ourselves back into life. Fortunately, the post-war decade was full of urgent work which Jews could not avoid. Displaced Person Camps had to be cleared. International support had to be won for the establishment of a Jewish State. After 1948 the *Ma'abarot* had to be filled and then cleared out. To be sure, the synagogue added a relevant paragraph or two to the *Azkarah*, but these were years when Jews, like everyone else, felt that they needed a respite from the tragic questions.

This silence lasted some fifteen years, broken only by the publication of Anne Frank's *Diary*, a book that the world chose to read as a message of hope rather than as a map of Hell. Eleanor Roosevelt was asked to write the introduction to the English edition and, as was expected, she defined Anne's journal as a testament to the resiliency of the human spirit. The Franks had had to hide because they were Jews. Anne was killed because she was a Jew, but her *Diary* was treated as a romance rather than as realistic history. Fresh from the horrors of global war, people, including many Jews, were not prepared to believe that the world remained as ugly a place as it had always been.

In grief there comes a time when we need to find a way — usually words — which will help us express and assimilate our loss. Around 1960, films began to be produced which dealt, at least tangentially, with Holocaust themes: Danny Kaye's *Me and the Colonel*, George Stevens' *Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) and Stanley Kramer's *Judgment in Nuremberg* (1961). 1960 saw the publication of the English revision of Elie Wiesel's *Night*, the first novel to gain wide attention and which took the reader directly into the camps.

Why 1960? Adolf Eichmann's capture and trial occurred around this time. Research by the Institute For Contemporary Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University has shown that the experience of listening to daily radio broadcasts of that trial acted as a catalyst in many Israeli homes and enabled survivors, for the first time, to talk with their children about what they had experienced. The wide coverage that the Eichmann affair received in the American press played a not dissimilar role in the dias-

pora. In addition, one could reasonably argue that the passage of time was reason enough to account for the breakout from silence. I also suspect that John Foster Dulles' peremptory 1956 order, dislodging the Israeli Defense Forces from the Suez Canal, forced American Jews to realize that even in a world dominated by the Allies, Jews would not have an easy time of it. The insecurities of the past were still with us.

Once the dam broke, a flood of Holocaust histories, essays, fiction, cantatas, museum exhibits and art appeared. One sensed an urgency to get it down. Those who wrote spoke of being troubled by the inadequacy of their presentation, but they had to speak. Most offered a single justification for their efforts: *Zachor*, "we must remember." There was a compelling need to witness.

Some would argue that those fifteen years of silence have been followed by twenty-five years of surfeit. In a recent issue of *Judaica Book News*, one in four reviews dealt with books on the Holocaust. Centers for the study of the Holocaust dot the academic landscape and Holocaust seminars fill the academic calendar. Perhaps a dozen new texts and readers on the Holocaust land each year on the desks of religious school principals. More university students enroll in courses on the Holocaust than in any other Jewish Studies offering. The Precious Legacy Exhibition drew tens of thousands of visitors. Yom Ha-Shoah services are an annual feature of synagogue life. Every Jewish community has a Holocaust commemoration.

If most of the writing is done by survivors, most of the reading is done by native American Jews; so the question, why? What motivates America's Jews to throng to Elie Wiesel's lectures and to buy so many of these books? One way to answer this question is to imagine ourselves attending a synagogue school board meeting whose major agenda item is a discussion of the advisability of introducing a course on the Holocaust in the Junior High School curriculum. Everyone is enthusiastic about the proposal, but someone quickly adds: "The material must not be too grizzly." Murmurs of assent are heard on every side. The discussion turns quickly to specifics: Which survivors should we invite? Would fourteen-year olds sit through and understand "The Sorrow and the Pity"? No one asks why such a course would be "good" for these youngsters.

The principal suggests some possible avenues of exploration. The problem of God. How could He? The problem of man. How could we? Hannah Arendt's banality of evil. The problem of the Christians. How could they? The problem of the Jews. Why didn't we? There is little reaction. These aren't the issues that they have in mind. "I want my child to know *what* happened." "Why?" "He should know he is a Jew." "I want him to know something about the real world." As the conversation unfolds, it becomes clear that these parents are worried that they may not have adequately equipped their children with some of the sensitivities that being Jewish has traditionally required. Growing up in an American suburb is a

reasonably comfortable experience. These children have never been told that because they are Jews there are professions and colleges which they may not choose. Few High School fraternities and sororities any longer restrict membership to gentiles. In their lives the operative division is between blacks and whites, not Christians and Jews.

The issue is not Auschwitz. "No simulations of the death camps, please." These parents insist that they are not worried about another Auschwitz. What they want is for their children to be prepared for the world outside of suburbia. They know that even in America being Jewish is somehow a special identity. These parents were born after the war, but as adults they have read the headlines about the Yom Kippur war, the United Nations' Zionism as Racism Resolution, Anatoly Scharansky and the Soviet prisoners of conscience and Nazis marching in Skokie. They worry that if there is a serious economic downturn some doors may suddenly close on children who may not be emotionally prepared for rejection.

As the school board meeting goes on, the principal presents a professionally prepared review of a text he proposes to use: Milton Meltzer's *Never To Forget*.

Meltzer's unique account of the Holocaust focuses on the human experience of its victims and villains. While not shying away from the horrible truths that emerge from diaries, letters, poetry, and other firsthand accounts, Meltzer does not subject us to an unceasing barrage of shocking incidents. Even in this hell, we are offered glimpses of those special people and moments in which love and kindness prevail. Meltzer places the ultimate blame for the Holocaust on world apathy: "Indifference is our greatest sin," he writes (Enid Davis, *A Comprehensive Guide to Children's Literature With A Jewish Theme*, 1951, p. 57).

One parent is excited: "That's it, precisely, indifference. Our kids are caught up in things and need to learn to be more empathetic to blacks and the less fortunate." Another quickly takes issue: "It's a book about Jews who were killed and about those, including Jews, who didn't care enough or do much. That's the indifference he's talking about."

The problem with looking to the Holocaust for moral guidance is that a tragedy of this magnitude inevitably will be interpreted in contradictory ways. Each generation, each person, will find in the Holocaust encouragement for what he already believes. If we agree that the lesson of the Holocaust is the sin of indifference, there is no agreement as to what is the corresponding virtue. Some will define that virtue as identification with the downtrodden; others, with equal ease and logic, will identify indifference with an activist Jewish-centered agenda.

Meir Kahane, in his Jewish Defense League *Handbook* (1972), derives his "we'll face down the world" thesis directly from the Holocaust: "A new philosophy was born as a new Jew arose from the mound of corpses at Auschwitz, Treblinka and Buchenwald . . . Jews whose hallmark is

action." My grandparents would have dismissed Kahane and his gang as *shtarkers* to whom no serious person would pay attention, but variations on the "never again" response can be heard in far more respectable quarters. It fuels the urgency with which many American Jews involve themselves in political activity that they feel benefits the Jewish people. For these, the lesson of the Holocaust is that no letter must be left unwritten, no Congressman left unvisited, no political contribution left unmade when Jews need a Jackson-Vanik Amendment, increased economic aid for Israel or the squashing of an arms sale to Jordan. I run across this response among the people who relish published talk about Jewish power or the level of Jewish campaign contributions. "Let them know who we are; that we can't be taken for granted." Such folk dismiss concern about single issue policies as the product of a ghetto, pre-Holocaust mentality.

For these American Jews, the lesson of the Holocaust is that it happened here. What happened here, of course, was that the Roosevelt Administration "coordinated a series of inactions" which led to the abandonment of some who might have been saved. That telling phrase is from Arthur D. Morse's *While Six Million Died* which became a bestseller among Jews because it "proved" that even a president whom Jews had trusted could order his Immigration Department to restrict visas, organize sham refugee conferences designed to delude rather than to save, and send the nine hundred and thirty Jews aboard the *St. Louis* back from Baltimore Harbor to Hamburg. "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

Others say "never again" and mean something quite different. They, too, are committed to Jewish survival, but fear the isolation of the Jewish community from those liberal and Third World forces which, they believe, will determine the world's future. They argue that all power is contingent and emphasize the limits of Jewish power. "Never again" they see as a pledge that only God and a transformed world can ultimately guarantee. They argue that Jews must be true to what they call their prophetic traditions and that Jewish survival will be assured only when poverty, illiteracy and injustice are eradicated. Their priority is distributive justice rather than securing this arms sale or that basing agreement. In their eyes the "If I am not for myself, who will be for me" agenda of the "Jewish lobby" presents a recipe for failure which will only isolate Israel from the West and American Jews from their natural allies and the values of their tradition; an exaggerated self-concern which borders on *hubris*. When they visit Yad Va'shem they linger over the rows of trees planted in the name of those righteous gentiles who saved the lives of Jews.

Irving Kristol and Arthur Waskow and others more extreme on both sides of the political spectrum have used, and will use, the Holocaust to justify their distinct political agendas. Neo-conservatives employ it to lend weight to their argument that Jews must support the Reagan arms budget and an interventionist American foreign policy. The New Jewish Agenda cites the Holocaust to lend emotional weight to the argument that Jews

must be active in civil rights, Third World concerns and the Nuclear Freeze. Those who agree with the particular argument see the point of the citation; those who doubt, do not.

Some who have noted these widely divergent responses have begun to suggest that the avid interest of American Jews in the Holocaust derives from little more than an hypnotic fascination with fire, in this case the fires of Hell. Interest in the Holocaust is much more than mindless fascination. Many have thought deeply about what happened; many recognize the immensity of the issues it raises; but we would do well to admit what far too few have so far recognized, that *the Holocaust can energize but not instruct. The voice of Auschwitz is an anguished wordless scream, not a clear, unmistakable message. The Holocaust cannot, and does not, provide the kind of vitalizing and informing myth around which American Jews could marshal their energies and construct a vital culture. Martyrs command respect, but a community's sense of sacred purpose must be woven of something more substantial than tears.*

Fackenheim's eleventh commandment is often quoted approvingly: "Do not give Hitler a posthumous victory," but what does this commandment require? Obviously, Jewish survival. So far, so good. But how should Jews go about assuring their survival? Intensified commitment to what? Traditional Judaism? Non-traditional Judaism? Jewish culture? A socialist reformation of society? Possession of the West Bank? Contributions to the UJA and Bonds? An active program of Outreach? Having a lot of babies?

American Jews became exercised when the President agreed to visit Bitburg Cemetery, less, I believe, because of the S.S. burials there than because of Mr. Reagan's comments about burying the past. It has become an article of faith in many quarters that the Holocaust must be kept alive, if not for the benefit of Jews then for the benefit of non-Jews. Jewish groups regularly sponsor Holocaust seminars for clergy and others. A major selling point cited by fundraisers responsible for the millions needed to build the National Holocaust Museum is the location of that center in Washington where it will be available to the millions of gentile tourists who annually visit the capital.

The tourists are there, but will they respond as many Jews think they will? The conventional wisdom holds that Christian awareness of Christian complicity — after all, the Holocaust happened in Christian Europe — shames and silences those who might otherwise be tempted to mouth the old prejudices. As proof, evidence is offered which suggests that anti-Semitism fell out of fashion once the world recognized the immensity of the evil Auschwitz represents. After World War II universities and professional schools abandoned admission quotas based on religion and Jews from places like Iowa, Ohio and Michigan, where there are no significant Jewish voting blocks, began to be elected to national office.

But will gentiles necessarily respond in the way that Jews would like? Waldheim's popularity rose when his Nazi past was revealed. Guilt is a

complex emotion which may lead to sincere regret or be sublimated and reappear in unexpected and perverse ways. Catholic Europe's reaction to the Crusaders' destruction of the Jewish communities along the Rhine was to justify these murders as acts pleasing to God. Had not God, Himself, decided to punish the Jews for the crimes of deicide and spiritual blindness, and were not the Crusaders doing God's bidding? Rather than confess error, new and more vicious lies were spread: the Jew was a poisoner of wells and a practitioner of child sacrifice.

Anti-Semitism may be out of favor, but anti-Zionism is not. The freedom with which many attack Zionism and almost every action of the Jewish State, all the while praising Judaism, suggests that a visit to a Holocaust Museum may not have the desired effect. Jesse Jackson's reaction to his visit to Yad Va'shem was to compare a Palestinian refugee camp with Auschwitz.

Some American Jews turn the reality of widespread hatred of Jews into a proof of Jewish distinction and, for this reason, become exercised when they read a piece which brackets the Holocaust with other instances of man's inhumanity: the slaughter of Armenians, Kurds, Cambodians, Ibos . . . Many a sermon has suggested that the Germans went after the Jews because simply by being alive, present, Jews witnessed to ideas which were a constant reproach to their idolatries: state power, racial superiority and the distinctiveness of the *volk*. Any number of proof texts leap to mind. "Have we not all one Father . . ." "Not by power, nor by might, but by my spirit." "Are you not as the Ethiopians unto me." As a sermon to Jews, this approach touches the heart of the Jewish commitment and encourages a not unworthy pride; but non-Jews, heirs, after all, of a different theological tradition, do not necessarily react the same way to evidence of the unique role of the Jew as victim. The Jew as victim has an honored place in what Jules Simon has called "the Church's teaching of contempt," the once authorized theology which held that the Jew deserves to be a wanderer and pariah because that is God's will. God intends that the Jews be punished for the crime of deicide and for their continuing blindness to The Truth and He commends those who help Him in this work. Jews would like to believe that Vatican II erased such ideas, once and for all, but ideas which have been around for millenia do not disappear overnight even if ordered to do so by an authoritarian church. I, for one, cannot sign on to the recommendation of the President's Holocaust Commission that "the study of the Holocaust become a part of the curriculum in every school system in the country." Who will teach? What will be taught? Imagine a classroom taught by a true believer or a true non-believer or someone who believed that we deserved our fate.

The one message that the voice of Auschwitz has clearly conveyed to this generation of American Jews is that as Jews they share a common fate. Insofar as we can speak of a self-conscious Jewish community in pre-

Holocaust America, it consisted largely of those who cared about their commitments to Jewish life. Those who did not, stood aside even if the outside world continued to consider them as Jews. Today few stand aside. "Given what happened, I can't walk away;" most Jews, the committed and the non-committed, are "together again."

The slogan "we are one" fits, but in what does our oneness consist? What purposes and values do we share? Until recently, the existence within our community of widely divergent purposes and agendas was masked to a degree by a broadly shared concern for Israel's survival. The UJA, Bonds, support for U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel, interest in Israel's hospitals, schools, museums, fields and factories provided activities in which the agnostic, orthodox, non-orthodox, secularist, liberal and conservative could, and did, involve themselves. But as the years have passed and the political situation in the Middle East has become more complex, as Israel's distinct social and cultural situation has led her to make decisions which many groups in America have found questionable, even threatening to Jewish unity, the ties between the American Jewish community and the Israeli community have become problematic.

The voice of Auschwitz is a scream, wordless. It demands commitment but does not define that commitment. Even Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust's premier spokesman, is not absolutely clear about the message that he hears and seeks to express. Wiesel provided a markedly different ending for the original Yiddish version of *Night* from the one that he prepared for the later English and French revision. In the original, once the war is over the protagonist, his alter ego, leaves the camp, determined to deny to any who might wish to do so the chance to minimize or deny the reality of his experience. He will live to witness. In the English version, he remains in the camp, standing in front of a mirror, silently contemplating his ghostlike image, apart, one of the walking dead. One ending is self-analytic and passive, the other equally self-analytic, yet Wiesel suggests that the survivor will take a first step back into life — as he, in fact, did.

Alan Mintz and David Roskies, among others, have tried to shape an effective and instructive myth out of the Holocaust by discussing the importance of the literary and artistic evocations of this tragedy, which they see as an affirmation of life, a transcendence to the purely tragic. To use Roskies' words: "If catastrophe is the presumption of man acting as destroyer, then the fashioning of catastrophe into a new set of tablets is the primal act of creation carried out in the image of God" (*Against the Apocalypse*, 1984, p. 310). Writing can be a meaningful act of transcendence for those who survived, but it cannot have a similar value for those who did not suffer, who can only contemplate. Moreover, writing is a private experience and we are talking of the spiritual health of an entire people.

The Holocaust must be recognized for what it was, a tragedy of unique proportions which imposes on future generations an obligation to

sustain and survive. The martyrs are precious, but no tragedy can define for Israel an ongoing and compelling national purpose. Commitments need to be stated positively. Unfortunately, despite its overwhelming emotional power and the efforts of many, the Holocaust does not provide a blueprint from which Jews can build a self-confident and significant future.

The doyenne of Holocaust research, Lucy Dawidowicz, spoke to this point in a recent interview.

It may sound paradoxical, but I must say that I'm often distressed by the almost obsessive, ceaseless attention that American Jews seem to give to the Holocaust today. It's important for the Holocaust to have a place in our historical memory. We have to teach our children about it. As we teach children about Passover and our history of redemption, so we also have to teach them about our history of destruction. One wants the right sense of proportion. I feel very strongly that, for the young, the continuing emphasis on the Holocaust is wrong. If we're a people that gets murdered, the young will flee from us. We have something more than that (*Present Tense*, '83-84, p. 24).

A somewhat dated study (1979) showed that ninety-three colleges offered courses in the Holocaust and that in thirty-nine of these schools this was the only course offered which dealt with some aspect of modern Jewish history or thought. No wonder that the Director of Harvard's Hillel Foundation felt impelled to say:

Our children and the children of our neighbors have been learning about the Greeks and how they lived, about the Romans and how they lived, and now, they will be learning about the Jews and how they were murdered. Is that all we Jews want to impart about ourselves to the children of this nation? (*Ben Zion Gold*).

Our dead are precious to us. Memory and the obligation of family and tradition play an important role in a thoughtful life, but would it not be better if the museums which are being built featured the accomplishments of four thousand years of our remarkably imaginative and wide-ranging religious culture rather than simply the soul-wrenching artifacts of a single decade of suffering? Yad Va'shem fits well in Israel where the Museum is surrounded by a vibrant state which testifies in all its aspects to Jewish capacity and creativity. No one will be able to visit a Hebrew University or an Israel Museum or a working kibbutz on the day that he tours the National Holocaust Museum. In Washington, a memorial to the Holocaust will cast a dark shadow which cannot, of itself, provide the light of clear purpose or a real sense of the meaning of Jewish life. Such a museum will speak of death, not life, of victimization, not civilization — a less than appropriate statement of the spirit of a people who, throughout their long history, have obeyed God's command: "Choose life."

The fires of Hell are mesmerizing, but Jews cannot organize their future solely by that light.

Visions of the Past: Jews and Greeks

HOWARD JACOBSON

“HEBRAISM AND HELLENISM.” SINCE MATTHEW Arnold coined the phrase, the notion of two rival and opposed forces competing for the soul of Western civilization has been a commonplace. In this essay I should like to examine one aspect of this conflict by focussing on a phenomenon that is present in ancient historical narrative and, although it appears *prima facie* of little import, seems to have ramifications that should affect our entire view of how Jews and Greeks related to their pasts and how these differing attitudes influenced their writing of history.

I begin with two examples, not necessarily the most persuasive, cogent or interesting ones, because they will serve to provide clear examples of what I am referring to and will enable us to see the methodological problems that here confront us. First, a passage from *1 Maccabees*. When Antiochus' officers come to Modiin to compel the residents to apostasy, Mattathias rejects their bribes and declares:

Though all the peoples under the king's rule obey him and depart from the worship of their fathers, yet I, my sons and my brothers, will walk in the covenant of our fathers. We will not forsake the Law (2:19-20).

This statement seems to be based upon several verses in Joshua's valedictory address, in which he advises the Jewish people to rid themselves of their idols and worship God alone, concluding that even should *they* choose idolatry, nonetheless “I and my house shall worship God” (Joshua 24:15).

Now an example from Xenophon's *Hellenica* (3.4.3). The author reports that Agesilaus, having decided to campaign against Asia, resolved to sacrifice first at Aulis. The point of the story is clear. In waging Hellenic war against Asia, Agesilaus was doing what Agamemnon had done centuries earlier and, so, after the model of Agamemnon's famous sacrifice at Aulis, Agesilaus desired to do likewise.

Several questions confront us in dealing with texts like these. First: the parallel or echo — is it really there? Is it possible that we are over-reading the text, seeing more than is present? In our case from *1 Macc.*, the nature of the context, the sentiment expressed, and the adversarial quality of the tone may all suggest that the echo is, indeed, genuine, but a hard-nosed reader might well dispute it. In Xenophon's text, the parallel is unquestionably there since the author himself comments on it.

HOWARD JACOBSON is professor of Classics at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

Second: If the echo is present, is it of substantive significance or is it purely stylistic, possibly even unintentional? Thus, for many Hebrew writers the style of the Bible was the determinative factor in their own work and Biblical texts were always immediately available in their heads for use. Biblical phrases would have flowed imperceptibly from head to pen. Similarly, evidence suggests that Greek playwrights after Euripides were so imbued with his style, that their tragic style almost became Euripidean.

Third: If the echo or parallel is of substantive significance, that is to say, intentional and calculated, what does it mean? Similarity of context may impel a writer to add an interesting connection, as a "literary device" and amounting to a private matter between writer and audience. It is possible, however, that the significance is of an entirely different order and that, in the author's view, the earlier event — or person — or combination of person and event is, in some sense, re-created. Thus, for example, Mattathias is meant to be seen as a new Joshua and Agesilaus as a new Agamemnon. This whole syndrome has implications for historical verisimilitude. If the author of *I Macc.* is interested in presenting Mattathias as Joshua, then the inference may be justified that Mattathias never made such a speech. Or if Xenophon is interested in seeing Agesilaus as Agamemnon, it seems more than likely that he himself invented Agesilaus' wish to sacrifice at Aulis. On the other hand, if the parallels are historically accurate, we are talking not merely of the historian's view, but of the self-image of the historical personage himself. That is to say, it is not merely that Xenophon and *I Macc.* saw their protagonists as *heroes redi-vivi*, but that Mattathias and Agesilaus so saw themselves.

In March, 1985, the American media reported, without comment, the execution of a convicted murderer in a Texas prison, noting that the prisoner had become a "born-again Christian" during his incarceration, that he had requested a final meal of unleavened bread, that he chose to die by lethal injection, and that his last words were "Forgive them father, for they know not what they do." This man clearly saw his role in history as that of the passion of Jesus recreated in himself, within his obvious constraints: the Last Supper of Passover, the crucifixion and the act of forgiveness. Instances as concrete and detailed as this one are not easy to come by from antiquity, but it illustrates the basic theme of this paper.

I am not concerned with eschatology, which, it seems to me, is perhaps a different phenomenon. As is well known, Jewish prophecy — and particularly Jewish eschatological prophecy — foresees the future as re-creation of the past. Thus, for instance, a famous passage by the prophet Ezekiel foretells the eventual redemption of the Jewish people from exile in terms that could not more clearly establish it as a renewal of the Exodus from Egypt (20:33-37, 42).¹ When the dead Sea sect foresees

1. See also Isaiah's prophecy of the return from Assyria and elsewhere, with God drying up

the eschatological war between the “sons of light” and the “sons of darkness,” the army of the former is a re-creation of the encampment of the Israelites in the desert. And when the sect foresees the messianic era, it is as a re-creation — or “restoration,” as Scholem and Talmon have called it,² — of the early Second Temple period, set in a reproduced Jerusalem and governed by twin Messiahs, the priestly and the royal, modelled on Zerubabel and Joshua the priest. This is, indeed, interesting, but *not* our concern here. Rather, we look at events that *are* occurring or *have* occurred, that are represented as renewal or re-creation of earlier history.

To be sure, these phenomena have their roots in the Bible, in many forms and many guises. Rachel’s long-time barrenness repeats that of Rebecca, who, in turn, is repeating the fate of Sarah. Isaac, in passing off his wife as his sister and subjecting her to potential mistreatment at the hands of Avimelech, the king of Gerar, is duplicating the act of his father Abraham. When Isaac’s wells are stolen from him by the shepherds of Avimelech, he again repeats Abraham’s history. I observe here, in passing, that no theories, justified or not, about multiple recensions or editions, or compositional doublets, can negate the obvious facts of what the Biblical text here tells us — and means to tell us.

To depart from the Patriarchs, we can readily recall how Joshua duplicates Moses’ feat of transporting the Jews across a body of water on dry land, and how the prophet Elisha reproduces a number of the miraculous deeds of his mentor Elijah. To cite but one more instance, in several ways the story of Joseph at Pharaoh’s court is re-created in the opening chapters of the book of Daniel. Here, however, we shall be concerned with non-Biblical and post-Biblical material.

I began with an illustration from *1 Macc.* That fertile work is an historical narrative of the fight waged for independence by the Jews of Judaea against the Greeks in the second century B.C.E., beginning with the deeds of Mattathias, moving through those of his sons and extending to the rule of John Hyrcanus. It is our central source for the Jewish history of the period, and was written in Hebrew toward the end of the second century B.C.E. (Momigliano would date it to 129). Unfortunately, the primary source for the work is the Greek translation, nothing of the original Hebrew having survived. That *1 Macc.* abounds in Biblical echoes is patent. But it seems to me no less clear that the echoes are often much more than that and can be seen as re-creations of the past. Thus, irrespective of the large differences between the two historical periods and events, *1 Macc.* seeks to present, at least in some degree, the conflict between Jews

the seas and transporting the Jews across on dry land (11:15-16, 52:12, actually “improved” versions). Recall, too, Isaiah’s vision of the future Jerusalem, under God’s protection in a fashion that re-creates God’s protection of the Jews in the desert (4:5-6). Other examples could be added.

2. See G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), p.5f and S. Talmon in H. W. Wolff (ed.), *Probleme biblischer Theologie* (Munich, 1971), p. 583f.

and Greeks as a repetition of the story of the Jews and the Egyptians in the days of Moses. It contrives, with the help of some contributory historical fact, to turn Antiochus into Pharaoh. Immediately before we hear of Antiochus' entry into Jerusalem, we are told, "Antiochus began to think of becoming king over Egypt . . . so he invaded Egypt with a large army, routed Ptolemy and conquered the land" (1:16-19). This account combines history with improvisation, for we do know that Antiochus conquered Ptolemy in 170-69 and had himself crowned king of Egypt, but we also know that the impetus for this action was not his own expansionist yearnings, but, rather, the inclination to act out of self-defense when the Ptolemaic army attempted to invade the Seleucid kingdom. But, then, neither Antiochus nor Pharaoh is to be given the benefit of the doubt. For the reader of *1 Macc.*, then, Antiochus, the persecutor of the Jews, is not merely ruler of Syria but of Egypt, too. We next hear of the king's despoiling of the Temple. Immediately thereafter the narrator reports that, two years later, Antiochus sent a large force to Jerusalem which pillaged the city, murdered its inhabitants, and established a garrison, in effect enslaving the city (1:29-36). The leader of this force is presented in such a way as to recall Pharaoh's taskmasters, sent by the king to torment the Jews.³ When, later, Antiochus resorts to the murder of infants (1:61), we know that we are witnessing a new Pharaoh.

Shortly thereafter, the king's men reach Modiin in their mission to turn the people from God and to pagan worship. Mattathias, as we noted earlier, refuses. When a Jew steps forward to sacrifice to the pagan deity, Mattathias kills him and then proceeds to kill Antiochus' officer as well. He and his sons then flee into the desert and hills, after inviting the people with the call, "whoever is zealous for the Torah, let him follow me" (2:27). Again, I believe, we have, *mutatis mutandis*, Mattathias re-playing Moses, who kills an Egyptian oppressor, quarrels with a fellow Jew, then flees into the desert (*Exodus* 2). Mattathias' call to the Jews to follow him may imitate Moses' call to his fellows (*Ex.* 32:26) on the occasion of their defection from God, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." Finally, on his death-bed, Mattathias instructs his sons and singles out two of them to succeed him, Judah to be military leader and Simon to serve as counselor. Note the language, "look, your brother Simon, I know that he is a man of counsel; heed him, he will be your father" (2:65). We have, unmistakably, an echo of the words of God to Moses, "Look, your brother Aaron

3. He is referred to as *archon phorologias*, "officer of tax-collection." Both because this seems to have little relevance here and because evidently this same man is called *musarches*, "officer of the Mysians" in *2 Macc.*, it is generally believed that the Greek represents a misreading of the Hebrew original, *Sar hamusym* as *sar hamysm*. Whether the author wrote the one or the other, what matters here is what he intended his audience to hear when he used the phrase. The term *sar hamysym* occurs once, in *Exod.* 1:11, in reference to the Egyptian taskmasters. Whether our author wrote *sar hamysym* or *sar hamusym*, he clearly wanted us to see Antiochus' henchmen as descendants of Pharaoh's taskmasters. For a full discussion of this text, see J. A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees* (New York, 1976 [Anchor Bible vol. 41]), pp. 211-12.

the Levite, I know that he is capable of speaking . . . he will be your mouth" (*Ex.* 4:14-16). Thus, brother Simon is, indeed, brother Aaron — and no surprise or accident this, for, as we will learn in chapter 14, Simon ultimately becomes High Priest and the office passes to his descendants. On Mattathias' death, Judah now becomes Moses and, in his first major exploit, the defeat of Seron's army (3:13-25), we sense, in a narrative replete with Biblical echoes from a wide variety of sources, a degree of re-enactment of Moses' victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea.⁴ The foreign enemy boasts of his projected victory (*Ex.* 15:9), the Jews, on desecrating the approaching enemy, express their despair (*Ex.* 14:10-12), the leader encourages the people and declares that God will provide the victory (*Ex.* 14:13-14), concluding *me phobeisthe*, "do not fear," Moses' words *'al tir'ah*. Finally, the author reports that, after Judah's defeat of Seron, fear of Judah and his brothers fell upon the neighboring gentiles (3:25), just as we hear in the "Song of the Sea" (*Ex.* 15:14-16).

We may conclude our look at *I Macc.* with a brief examination of an episode in chapter 5, a section that treats Judah's battles against neighboring hostile cities in Palestine and nearby. After destroying the city of Karnaim, Judah gathers the Jews of Gilead and leads them back to Judaea. When they reach Ephron, the inhabitants will not allow them to pass through, so Judah attacks the city, destroys it and leads his Jews safely into Judaea (5:44-54). Now, the language used in the description here is such that we cannot doubt that *I Macc.* is re-enacting here Moses' rescue of the Jews from Egypt and his transporting them to the promised land. The description of the masses who follow Judah, "young and old, women and children, all their possessions" recalls the Israelites who left Egypt. Especially telling are the lines that follow (46-48):

They came to Ephron . . . they could not go round it to the right or the left . . . Judah sent them a friendly message, "Let us pass through your land to get to our land. No one will do you harm. We will just pass through on foot." But they refused to open to him.

Recall now the narrative in *Deuteronomy* 2 of the Jews' encounter with the Amorites as they get near Palestine. Moses sends messengers with "words of peace" (2:26), like Judah's *logois eirenikois*. He says, "Let us pass through your land. We will keep to the highway and not go either to the right or the left . . . we shall just pass through on foot." These are exactly Judah's words, except that in *I Macc.* the expression "we shall not go either right or left" has become the narrator's "they could not go either right or left." Sichon refuses to allow them (*lo 'abah*), just as the Ephronites *ouk eboulonto*, were unwilling. Judah then does battle with Ephron, defeats it, plunders it, kills the inhabitants, just as Moses did to Sichon, Heshbon and the

4. It is interesting that Eusebius (*HE* 9.9.4-8) sees Constantine's victory at the Mulvian bridge as a kind of re-creation of Moses' victory at the Red Sea.

Amorites (2:33-35).⁵ Finally, chapter 5 tells of the growing stature of Judah — “Judah and his brothers were greatly honored in all Israel and among all gentiles who heard of their fame” (63) — a description that may be intended to recall Moses (*Ez.* 11:3). After nine plagues have been inflicted upon the Egyptians, “Moses became very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh’s servants and in the eyes of the people.”

One more point here. Goldstein has argued that Mattathias and Judah are occasionally portrayed in *1 Macc.* in the image of Pinechas and King David,⁶ sometimes, indeed, in the very passages or episodes where I have argued here modelling on the story of Moses. I think this true and significant. Laws of physics may teach that two objects cannot co-exist in the same space at the same time. But the laws of psychology, that pertain to the human mind, are not governed by the rules that apply to the physical world. Two ideas — or, in our context — two echoes, two parallels, two models — can certainly occupy one and the same piece of mental space. Re-enactment can surely be — and sometimes surely is — to use a trite term, overdetermined.

There are few Jewish works from antiquity that the twentieth century is happy to call “historiography.” *1 Macc.* may stand out in this respect. I think this attitude may be a mistake. Be this as it may, it is certainly not a relevant posture with regard to the issues under discussion. Our interest lies in the way that the present views, depicts, creates or recreates whatever events that it *considers* to be real or wishes to be taken as real. Thus, when we turn to works like *3 Macc.* — or, perhaps, one step further removed — the book of *Judith*, it matters little what degree of factual exactitude we assess each to have. What does matter, in each case, is that the authors anticipated that the reality of the events described would not be held in doubt by the audience — and so, for our purposes, works like these are no less a source for understanding the ancient Jew’s view of, and attitude toward, the past than is *1 Macc.*

3 Macc. has nothing to do with the Maccabees — it is a work written in Greek, probably toward the end of the first century B.C.E., and recounts the persecution of Egyptian Jews by Ptolemy Philopator in the third century, his attempts to murder the Jews en masse, and the divine intervention that caused the king to relent and to give honor and protection to the Jews under his rule. At least at the outset, in this story of the persecution of Jews by the king of Egypt, it is not surprising that the author portrays some aspects as a re-creation of the Biblical experience of the Jews in Egypt. Ptolemy orders that the Jews be reduced to the status of slaves and those who refuse are to be killed (2:28). When he is dissatisfied with the

5. 5.55ff *1 Macc.* tells the story of an unauthorized battle in a way that makes it a repetition of the episode at *Nu.* 14:40ff, where some Jews defy Moses’ orders, attack the Canaanites and Amalekites on their own initiative, and are defeated. For a discussion of this passage, see Goldstein (*supra* n. 3), p. 304.

6. Goldstein, pp. 5ff.

results, he conceives a plan to kill Jews in large numbers (3:1). He orders that a census of the Jews be taken and the author lays emphasis on their great number, just as chapter one of *Exodus* stresses their fertility and increase in population (4:14-20). In explaining his motivation, Ptolemy remarks (3:24), "lest disturbance arise and these people will betray us and become our enemies" an echo of Pharaoh's rationale in *Ex. 1:10*, "lest, if war should befall us, they join our enemies and fight against us."⁷ In the next chapters, we read how, through divine intervention, Ptolemy goes back and forth between decisions to slaughter the Jews and a resolution not to harm them at all, just as Pharaoh in *Exodus* wavered in his murderous resolve after several of the plagues. When the priest, Eleazar, prays to God for help and, in traditional fashion, mentions the many past occasions when God redeemed the Jewish people, he begins with a reference to the salvation from Pharaoh, "the former ruler of this (*tautes*) Egypt," explicitly recognizing the parallel. Thus, like *1 Macc.*, *3 Macc.* also re-creates an episode in the history of Hellenistic Judaism in the image of the Biblical tale of the Jews in Egypt. Yet, as also with *1 Macc.*, this is only a part of the whole. Let me add at least one general observation — the author of *3 Macc.* has envisioned and portrayed these events not merely as a re-creation of "the Jews in Egypt," but, even more so, as a re-enactment of "the Jews in Persia," for, over and again, he represents this narrative of persecution, attempted extermination, miraculous salvation, and transformation of hostile king to protector and benefactor as a re-creation of the book of *Esther*.⁸

Let us turn now to the book of *Judith*. We are all familiar with this wonderful story; how the tyrant, Holophernes, invades Judaea with his great forces, how the beautiful widow, Judith, with her faith in God intact when all about her the Jewish people are in despair, plots to use her beauty and wits to overcome the enemy general, and how she succeeds and brings triumph and salvation to her people. Scholars, of course, debate the context, the date and, indeed, the very historicity of the events described. Again, this matters little to us, for, regardless of the degree of factual accuracy and, indeed, of actuality present in *Judith*, the reality is that both author and audience took the story as genuine and serious. The book of *Judith*, written almost certainly in Hebrew (or Aramaic), though surviving only in translations, especially Greek, is replete with Biblical echoes. Aside from those that are essentially stylistic in nature, there are several that compel us to see the heroine as a re-creation of earlier figures. It is impossible to read this tale of the Jewish woman who puts the enemy general to sleep and then kills him without recalling Yael and Sisera in *Judges 4*. There, too, (in *Judges 5* as in *Judith 16*) the act is followed by a lengthy song of victory in which God and the heroine are praised. Indeed, since Yael's role is brief and limited to the one act (she is here and

7. M. Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (New York, 1953), p. 52.

8. Hadas, pp. 6-8.

gone in a matter of five verses, while Judith is central — the final nine chapters of the book revolve around her), it is clear that Judith is not merely a second Yael, but, also, a second Deborah. One might see her as Deborah and Yael conflated. She is portrayed as influential, devout and wealthy, taking the initiative in making plans and decisions for the community, disputing with, encouraging and instructing the weak-kneed male leaders. All of this we see in the character of Deborah. Finally, when victory is won, it is Judith, like Deborah, who sings the song of triumph and thanksgiving.

We turn now to a work that has scarcely any claims to historicity, but, nonetheless, is a serious — and seriously-taken — narrative and, therefore, relevant to our discussion; the book of *Tobit*. In this story or folktale, we hear of two suffering Jewish families in the East. With divine aid, their troubles are removed and the two families are united in happy marriage. Where and when *Tobit* was written remains disputed, but there is no doubt that our Greek text is a translation from a Hebrew or Aramaic original. Biblical echoes are present with some frequency. I want to look at one particular section in the narrative, where the full extent of the Biblical echoes have been missed and, with them, the importance of the entire episode. Let me briefly summarize. The hero, Tobit, on an earlier trip to Media, had left a large sum of money in the safekeeping of a relative. Now, helpless, blind, poor and anticipating death, he calls his son, Tobias, before him and gives him what are apparently a father's last instructions, including, in his lengthy speech, matters of ethics, of service to God and of proper marriage. He also reveals the existence of the sum of money in Media and gives Tobias the token whereby he will be able to claim it. Tobias sets out, accompanied by a guide who is, in reality, the angel Raphael who directs him to the home of his cousins where Tobias falls in love with Sarah and marries her. After celebrations, he returns home with his new bride, his marriage presents and his father's money. Before long, Tobit is miraculously cured and all's well that ends well — very well, indeed. In short, this is a story of a man who travels to a city in the East and returns home with a wife. Our author has effectively made this a patriarchal narrative. Twice we have such stories in the book of *Genesis*. First, when Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac and, second, when Isaac sends Jacob to Laban to find himself a wife. In general, one can say that our author has created his Tobit-Tobias as a doublet of Isaac-Jacob, though — it is the regular pattern of conflation — he also utilizes elements that come from the Abraham-Eliezar (if I may so designate the anonymous servant) story. The structural similarities are obvious. In each case, there is an aged, blind father who believes himself near death. In each case, the son is sent abroad on a mission. In each, he is instructed in similar words, "Choose your wife from the race of your ancestors; do not take a foreign wife who is not of your father's tribe" (*Tobit* 4:12), or, as Isaac instructs Jacob (28:1-2), "do not marry a Canaanite woman. Go to

Padan-Aram . . . and take as wife one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother." Similar are the words of Abraham to Eliezar in *Gen.* 24:3-4. The angel Raphael accompanies Tobias, just as angels accompany Jacob (*Gen.* 28:12; cf. too, 32:2 and 48:16; also, Abraham's words to Eliezar in 24:7, which are clearly echoed in 5:17). When Tobit inquires as to the identity of the angel, Raphael answers, "why do you have to know" (5:12), just as the angel says to Jacob, "why do you ask my name" (*Gen.* 32:30). When Tobias arrives at his destination, there is immediate conversation between him and the woman of the house who inquires, "where are you from, my brothers?" "Do you know Tobit?" "Is he well?" (7:3-5), thereby duplicating the dialogue between Jacob and the shepherds of Haran (*Gen.* 29:4-6), though with the roles of questioner and respondent reversed. When Tobias is seated at the table and offered food, he declares, "I will not eat until you settle my business" (7:12), just as Eliezar declares, "I will not eat until I have spoken my piece" (*Gen.* 24:33),⁹ and, in each case, the host responds, "This has been decreed by God; take her" (*Gen.* 24:50-51; *Tobit* 7:12). After fourteen days of wedding festivities, Tobias asks that his father-in-law "send me away" (10:8), since he wishes to return home to his father and mother. Raguel tries to dissuade him, saying "stay with me," but when Tobias stands firm he bestows gifts and sends him off. Up to a point, this follows the narrative of Jacob's initial attempt to leave Laban, when, after fourteen years (*Gen.* 30:25) he says "send me away" but Laban succeeds in coaxing him into staying.¹⁰

It is apparent that in narrative recounting of the past Jews had a tendency to see events and persons as doublets of earlier events and persons. When we turn to the Greeks, however, what do we see? There is extant a fair amount of Greek narrative recounting the past, be it in the form of history proper or biography or ethnography or genealogy. How large a role does "re-creation" play in these writings? An interlocutor might ask, "Why should we expect to find it among the Greeks? It is scarcely a necessary — perhaps not even a desirable — element in historiographical narrative." I will attend to this question shortly, but even this very absence of expectation would be significant and enlightening. To return to the earlier question. Insofar as I can tell, Greek historians avoid

9. On these two passages, see F. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit* (New York, 1958), pp. 87 and 89.

10. A small problem here has troubled commentators, yet it can probably be resolved when one perceives the role of re-enactment. After the marriage is consummated, fourteen days of wedding festivities are held (8:20; 10:8). Readers are puzzled since, traditionally, wedding celebrations last only seven days. Scholars suggest that the lengthened period marks the magnitude of the miracle or of the happiness. But when we consider that the whole narrative of Tobias' journey to Media, his marriage and his return home are a re-enactment of Jacob's experience in Mesopotamia, then we must also remember that, for Jacob, there were surely fourteen days of wedding festivities, one week for Leah, one for Rachel. And, so, Tobias, though his tale will allow him only one wife, still gets Jacob's fourteen days of celebration.

almost entirely the presentation of events as re-creations of earlier ones. I mention some few examples. There are indications that Hellenicus may have patterned his account of Theseus after Heracles and so rendered Theseus an *alter Hercules*.¹¹ Duris seems to have superficially modelled his account of the Third Sacred War after the Trojan War as Callisthenes did for the First Sacred War.¹² Later, Pausanias (10.19.5-10.23) described the Gallic invasion of Greece in 279 in terms that partially made it a repetition of the Persian invasion, even introducing divine encouragement, as at Delphi in Herodotus 8, and also the appearance of ghost-heroes, as at Marathon.¹³

Images and portrayal of the self are a somewhat more fertile ground. Among the Greeks, as among all peoples, there were individuals who saw themselves as re-creating the lives or deeds of earlier men. Thus, as discussed earlier, King Agesilaus, who saw himself as another Agamemnon invading Asia, or Milo and Nicostratus, who went out to battle wearing the garb of Hercules (*Diod. Sic.* 12.9.6; 16.44.3). Polybius, if we can accept Paul Friedländer's view, saw himself and Scipio as Socrates and Alcibiades respectively.¹⁴ But, in this regard, two figures stand out. First is the Epirote king, Pyrrhus, who represented himself as a second Achilles and went so far as to attempt heroic battle in the Homeric fashion. The second is, of course, Alexander the Great. He, too, saw himself as Achilles. He visited Troy and claimed to possess Achilles' lyre; he punished an enemy by dragging him around, as Achilles had maltreated Hector¹⁵; and, on his death bed, he noted that, like Achilles, he was destined to die young. He even had his historians so date the Trojan War as to render him the millenarian return of Achilles.¹⁶ There is also evidence that Alexander postured as other great figures, both mythological and historic. I shall return to him and Pyrrhus.

This type of self-image has no lack of significant examples among the Jews. Josephus is an excellent one. In his role as "Warner," forecasting to his fellow Jews the futility of their opposition and the inevitability of defeat, he saw himself as Jeremiah (*B/J* 5.9.4, 392f). With his ability to interpret dreams and forecast the future, with his liberation from prison to palace and his position as counselor to the king, Josephus saw himself as Joseph. And who knows but if Josephus saw himself briefly as Moses when, as commander of the Galilee, he appointed *seventy* men to oversee

11. See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1923), #4, fragments 164-68, with Jacoby's comments on p. 471.

12. See Jacoby's comments on #76 fragment 2 and #124 fragment 1.

13. It is obvious that associations of historical figures with mythological ones in comedy (see e.g., Plutarch *Pericles* 24) are entirely irrelevant.

14. See *American Journal of Philology*, 66 (1945): 341-48.

15. Quintus Curtius 4.6.29, probably derived from Cleitarchus. See N. G. L. Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 128.

16. See D. Asheri in *Saggi di Letteratura e Storiografia Antiche* (Como, 1983), pp. 53-98, especially pp. 65-6.

the region (*BJ* 2.570) as, perhaps, Luke represents Jesus as Moses when he appoints seventy men.¹⁷

Next, there is the Tobiad Joseph. There are elements in our accounts that suggest that he — or perhaps some chronicler of his life — tried to see or portray himself as a Biblical Joseph *redivivus*, negotiating with the Egyptian king on behalf of his fellow Jews, enhancing the economic fortunes of the Jews, and, in general, as Josephus puts it (*AJ* 12.224), “bringing the Jews from poverty and wretchedness to a happier way of life.” He counsels the kings and undertakes economic reform for him. Indeed, another Joseph! This phenomenon may even have taken collective form.

It has been argued, though not proved, that the Zealots of the sixties who fought the Romans saw themselves as Maccabees recreated, like the heroes of 200 years earlier who had fought the Greeks to prevent the destruction of the Jewish religion.¹⁸ It is also worth noticing how, in many of these cases, the identity of names seems to have been a determining factor. Thus, the public figures Josephus Flavius and the Tobiad Joseph both identify with their namesake Joseph. The Zealots, one of whose leaders was a Judah, identify with Judah’s Hasmoneans.

What then appears to be almost a reflex-action on the part of Jews was but an occasional and sporadic phenomenon among the Greeks, indeed, perhaps even less prevalent than I have indicated. If we examine two of the most impressive examples that I have cited among the Greeks, Pyrrhus and Alexander, we realize that both of these kings were on the fringes of the Greek world, with their Greekness somewhat in doubt¹⁹ and, so, their identifying themselves with the great Homeric hero were deliberate and calculated attempts to Hellenize themselves. Among the true Greeks, such identification with the past was very infrequent. What makes this even more interesting and puzzling is the conceptual view of time and the past that the Greeks generally held, for they believed that time was circular or cyclical, and envisioned it not merely in global terms, i.e., in periodic *ekpurosis* or conflagration of the world, but even down to the smallest details. As Eudemus wrote, “(according to the Pythagoreans), the same things will recur . . . I shall talk to you again with this rod in my hand.”²⁰ Or, as a Stoic fragment puts it, “Socrates and Plato and their friends will exist again and argue again,”²¹ (a view that St. Augustine [*Civit.* 12.14] took pains to reject). To this we may add the Pythagorean — and rather widespread — belief in *metempsychosis*, certainly calculated to encourage the belief in the repetition of persons and, presumably, then,

17. Luke 10:1, though we are not certain whether the correct reading is 70 or 72.

18. See W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus* (New York, 1956), with conclusions summarized on pp. 203-4.

19. One recalls how Greek competitors sought to ban Alexander the First from the Olympic games on the grounds that he was a foreigner (Herodotus 5.22).

20. See F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, vol. 8 (Basel, 1969²), fragment 88.

21. See H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1903), fragment 625.

events. Finally, we may think of Thucydides' view of the function of historiography, that is, that by studying the past we can predict how the future is likely to go and thereby guide our decisions and actions (1.22.4).²²

Given the currency of such ideas among the Greeks, it is particularly remarkable that they, in general and their historians, in particular, were apparently unwilling to see the events of their lives or of the recent past as recurrences of earlier ones. Why is it that Pericles or Themistocles or Alcibiades (or their chroniclers) seem not to have envisioned themselves as repeating the great deeds of the Greek mythical or historic past? Why is it that Herodotus, for all the clarity with which he sees the Persian wars as part of a succession of conflicts between East and West, including the Trojan War, still does not seem to have any inclination to perceive and present the fifth century conflict as a re-enactment, on any level or in any degree, of the war at Troy? Why, if Thucydides explicitly holds this medical-diagnostic model of history, why does he not show us that the events which he depicts are recurrences of past events? The answer to all of these questions lies, I believe, in our understanding the Greeks' view of themselves and their past — and, for our purposes, the difference between it and the view of the Jews.

In a famous essay written some three decades ago, Prof. van Groningen argues at length and with much learning that the Greeks lived “in the grip of the past” and found in it the real values of life, the present tending to be little more than the inevitable result of that past.²³ Now, although it would be folly to deny that the Greeks had a profound interest in the past — they were, after all, the fathers of historiography and they lived with representations of the mythic past, in literary, dramatic, cultic and artistic forms, all about them — yet, I think that van Groningen's thesis is seriously flawed.

Although, in some areas, one can see how important the past was to the Greeks, in others — and equally significant ones — the past was virtually without meaning to them. This is one reason why, in spite of all of the intellectual cross-currents that swirled about them and should have dictated the very opposite, they had little interest in seeing the past in the present. Their past as history, their past as reality was personally unimportant. The past as enduring culture was, of course, a different story. The Greeks found pride, identity and values in the constant presence and relevance of Greek myth in drama, poetry and art. Myth in drama could have contemporary applicability. The Parthenon-metopes could bring together various scenes of Greek myth as metaphor for current ideals, for the triumph of order and civilization over disorder and barbarism. But historical connectedness is missing. Van Groningen notices, but dismisses, Aristippus' observation that man has only a present, for the future

22. Some interpret Thucydides differently, but also from a functional-diagnostic viewpoint.

23. B. A. van Groningen, *In the Grip of the Past* (Leiden, 1953).

may not be and the past is gone.²⁴ We should not quickly reject this as an aberration. None other than Pindar, for whom no celebration of the present was possible without reference to the past, nonetheless, as van Groningen himself also remarks, clearly sees man poised on the edge between the unknown future and the unchangeable past, and it is there that he must make his mark.²⁵ I suspect that we should see this as generally true of the Greek psyche. What matters is the present (which, of course, includes the immediate and foreseeable future).

Let us now glance at one last branch of Greek literature which may, *prima facie*, seem to contradict what I have said here. I refer to oratory. Far from giving the impression that the past was meaningless, Greek orators appear to be almost obsessed with it. References to persons and events of the past, both historic and the mythical, can be found on nearly every page. But the truth is that these are merely yet more of the oratorical "tricks of the trade." Allusions to the past serve a variety of useful and necessary functions for the orator and this is what matters to him, but the past, *per se*, means little. Perhaps nothing could show this more clearly than the fact that, as Jacoby, Pearson, Nouhaud and others have demonstrated,²⁶ though the orators were abysmally ignorant of history, they were never concerned to let a small thing like "ignorance of the facts" stand in the way of their argument. They were always ready to pull a fact or pseudo-fact out of their historical grab-bag to utilize as a *paradeigma*, a precedent for determining a particular course of action. They were also happy to use historical examples to shame their audience into action, by portraying the gap between the character of the present generation and the ancestors of old. But the notion that the past had any substantive reality, that the present was, in some important way, a piece of that past, was, by and large, beyond them. It strikes me as significant that in all of Demosthenes' attacks against Philip and his pleas to the Athenians to rouse themselves against the foreigner, only once (I believe) does he represent his contemporary Greeks as re-enacting the battle of Greeks against foreigners in the early fifth century (6.10-11).²⁷

Jews consistently saw themselves, both in large (i.e., the Jewish nation) and in small (individuals), as re-experiencing, re-creating or re-living the history of earlier Jews: Mattathias as Pinechas, Judah Maccabee as David, Hellenistic Jews as Pharaonic Jews, Rome as Edom, and so on. Much of Jewish pseudepigraphical work is a variation on this phenomenon, pseudepigrapha not as falsification, not as endeavor to lend a work prestige, but, rather, as a reflection of a real identification with the

24. Ibid., p. 122, note 1.

25. Ibid., p. 81.

26. See Jacoby (supra n. 11), vol. 3B1 (Leiden, 1954), p. 95; L. Pearson, in *Classical Philology* 36(1941): 209-29; M. Nouhaud, *L'Utilisation de l'Histoire par les Orateurs Attiques* (Paris, 1982).

27. There is a slight allusion at 9.36. See, too, Isocrates 5.111-115 for an interesting example involving Philip.

past. Not so the Greeks. The past was interesting, it was serviceable, it was paradigmatic, it had utilitarian value — for the needs of the present. But if the Greeks were conscious of anything, it was change, indiscriminate change, *tyche*, all too often happenstance, unexpected and unpredictable. To see the past in the present — or the other way round — would have surely seemed an unwarranted imposition of order and pattern on the workings of the world. As Demetrius of Phaleron commented (Polybius 29.21), when noting how the Persians had gone from mastery of the world to oblivion in fifty years, “*tyche* always acts in novel fashion and against our calculations.” When the Tegeans and Athenians dispute (Herodotus 9.26-7) over who should have the left wing, each bases its claim on the heroic deeds of its ancestors. But the issue is resolved when the point is made that the remote past is irrelevant, that things change, that those who were brave and capable in times gone by might be mediocre now — and vice versa. The debate is resolved on the basis of recent and current merit. Even Isocrates, determined opponent of the Athenians’ arch-enemy, the Persians, is capable of recognizing how changeable things are, how strong is the absence of historical continuity, how easily enemies become allies and the disgraced become heroes (5.42ff). The Greeks, then, could not feel that the past was, in any significant way, a part of the present.

The idea that the past could be re-created in the present existed for the Greeks primarily in one area, biological lineage. Our finest illustrations of this come from poetic texts, for example, the *Odyssey*, in which the emphasis on Telemachus’ physiological duplication of his father Odysseus is paralleled by psychological and spiritual similarities and in the son’s repetition of the actions of his father. Hector, in the *Iliad*, can see his son Astyanax (6.476ff) as a future Hector, pre-eminent in Troy like his father. Or think of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, a play that revolves around the notion that a son is ultimately a re-creation of his father, culminating in Philoctetes’ statement to Neoptolemus, “You have shown your nature and true breeding, son of Achilles.” (1310-11). The significance of the blood line of the victor is routine in Pindar.

This tendency must have been rather common among the Greeks. Consequently, in the two most striking instances of the phenomenon of re-experience that we noticed among the Greeks — Alexander and Pyrrhus each seeing himself as *Achilles redivivus* — it is noteworthy that in both cases the claim was made that the king was a descendant of the Homeric hero. It is lineage that is decisive. In sum, it seems clear that, while Greeks were able to see re-enactment or re-experience operative in history, it was essentially as a biological or genetic phenomenon, while Jews could see it not only in this fashion (as e.g., in the patriarchal narratives), but, also, as a national phenomenon.

The Jews had a sense of the essential continuity and connectedness of history. The continuity was meaningful and history’s repeating itself was

both a result of this meaningfulness and a manifestation of it. For the Jews, the past, no less than the present, had inherent importance. For the Greeks, on the other hand, the past consisted of discrete and discontinuous segments. Aristotle distinguished history from tragedy in the fact that history's events were *not* organically connected (*Poetics* 23.1459A).²⁸ The Greek concept of the individual as an essential and integral part of the community was basically a synchronic, not a diachronic, notion. The individual is not dissociable from his contemporary community but, more easily so, from his historic community. Plutarch's (*De Sera* 15f) and Isocrates' (*De Pace* 120) emphasis on the abiding organic identity of the *polis* are rare statements. As Newman wrote of Aristotle, although the philosopher is, of course, aware that the past of a state influences its present, nonetheless, "the notion of the historic continuity of the State belongs to a later time."²⁹

The Greek attitude is largely pragmatic. Like Aristotle's tragedy, which serves a particular function, *katharsis*, so examination of the past has its own use — diagnosis, prognosis and determination of the action. In the re-enactments and the patterns of Jewish history the Jews could see God actively at work. But historiography for the Greeks was a product of the Ionian impulse. The same forces that gave birth to Greek science yielded Greek historiography. The same genius that could see cosmic history in terms of a purely speculative atomic theory could see human history in equally remote, impersonal and theoretical terms. It is distance rather than involvement that marks Greek historiography. There is intellect and curiosity at work, but a distinct lack of personal involvement. Thus it is that the works of genealogy which the Greeks wrote were almost exclusively devoted to mythical times and heroes. Nor is it surprising that so much of Greek historiography is the work of outsiders: Herodotus writing from an Ionian perspective, Thucydides, Polybius, Androtion, Timaeus, all writing in exile; Hieronymus the Cardian, Theopompos from Chios. Even the *horoi*, the local histories, were not so much the result of patriotic feelings as of curiosity, and they were evidently often written by foreigners, like Hellanicus' famous *Atthis*. Their aim, as Dionysius (Thucyd. 5) tells us, was to disseminate knowledge. Moreover, Greeks were more taken by the special, the individual, the unique than by the repeated. Aristotle declared, "what is unique is praiseworthy" (*Rhet.* 1396B). The Greeks were fascinated by the notion of *protos heurtes*, the man who was the first to invent or discover something. When St. Paul came to Athens (*Acts* 17:21) he found the Athenians interested in little else than "telling or hearing new things." History, Aristotle wrote, recalls the particular. And it is this emphasis on the particular rather than on a

28. Aristotle presumably means vertical inorganicity as well as horizontal. See D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle: Poetics* (Oxford, 1968), p. 215 and G. F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 573-79.

29. W. L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1887), pp. 287-8.

perspective that embraces the general, the universal, that necessarily limits the range and scope of Greek historiography.

For the Jews, temporal lines are routinely blurred, "definition" is fuzzy. When the Passover text states, "God redeemed not only our ancestors, but us too with them," there is more here than a paraphrase of "Had God not rescued our ancestors, we and our children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh." For "every Jew is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt" and when the four sons are answered, twice the response is "God did this *for me* when *I* went out of Egypt." A combination of coincidence and calculated application of the re-experience notion has resulted in the ninth day of Av being the date on which Jews mourn a whole series of catastrophes, stretching over 2,000 years. Thus, destruction of the Second Temple becomes re-enactment of the destruction of the First, which, in turn, is a kind of re-experience of God's decree against the Jews in the desert. The fall of Beithar then becomes yet another disastrous re-experience and so on down to (at the least) the expulsion from Spain in 1492.

I end with an interesting sidelight. Nearly half a millennium after Alexander, when the Greek world was effectively dominated by the Roman government, with self-determination and self-definition severely limited and nostalgia for the great Greek past on the rise, there is evidence that then the Greeks did develop some substantial, if artificial, sense of connectedness to the past. It is reflected not merely in the archaizing propensities of the second sophistic, but in an increase in the "re-enactment" phenomenon that we have been discussing. A prime example is the historian, Arrian, who saw himself as another Xenophon, wrote an *Anabasis* as did Xenophon, wrote biographical monographs, moved, it seems, to Athens so as to live in Xenophon's city, and even named his dogs after Xenophon's. It was an age when Greeks named their children after Homeric heroes.³⁰ But all of this was the product of frustration and nostalgia and could never be authentic.

The idea of repeating the past has often been a source of discomfort. Santayana warned that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The Jews were able to view the past positively (even though re-experience often meant more suffering), both because there was much in their past that was deemed worth repeating and, especially, because the re-experiencing of the past was seen as a part of God's divine pattern in history. After all, Jews still say, of their brethren in the Soviet Union, "let my people go."

30. See, especially, E. L. Bowie in *Past and Present* 46(1970): 3-41; also, F. Millar in *Journal of Roman Studies* 59(1969) 12-29, though his perspective and conclusions are sometimes different.

The Wall of Communication

MORDECAI ROSHWALD

THE WORD "WALL" CONJURES UP CERTAIN images. One thinks of city walls which, in antiquity and in the middle ages, served as a protection against assault by an enemy. One thinks of the great wall of China — an ambitious effort to protect an entire country against invasion. With reference to more recent situations, one's thoughts ramble on to the Berlin wall, which serves not as a safeguard against an attack, but as a means to prevent defection from Eastern Europe to the West.

In all of these cases, the wall is a means of separation and division. It is built to impede contact between groups of humanity. The intended contact may be hostile or friendly, and the wall may be aimed against an enemy invasion or to forestall domestic evasion — but the wall itself is a device of division. Indeed, the point needs no elaboration, as it is virtually obvious. Or is it?

Surprisingly, in the Jewish experience, a wall can have also another significance. To be sure, there was the wall of Jericho which, meant to protect its inhabitants, fell under the impact of the blast of the trumpets of the children of Israel led by Joshua. There were other walls in the history of Israel which failed to protect their inhabitants against more conventional assaults. There were the walls of the ghetto — concrete or invisible — which lay at the foundation of Jewish separation from their host countries for many generations. In all of these instances the walls, in Israelite and Jewish experience, worked in a way no different from their universal function.

Yet, as intimated, there is another aspect to the wall in Jewish experience. This peculiar facet is, in a way, foreshadowed in a story about Hezekiah, the king of Judah, who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (II Kings 18:3). On falling "sick unto death," Hezekiah "turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord" (II Kings 20:1-2 and ff.). The prayer was heard and the Lord promised to heal the king and to prolong his life.

The wall, in this case, could be viewed merely as a part of the room structure and the king's turning as an accidental and trivial act. Yet, it should be noted that this act preceded the king's prayer, and it seems to indicate that the king found that "talking to the wall," contrary to the ironic meaning of the phrase in folksy Yiddish, is a way of reaching out to God. Turning to the wall may symbolize turning away from mundane

MORDECAI ROSHWALD is Emeritus Professor, University of Minnesota.

affairs, from the world in which one leads one's daily existence, to the eternal, to the absolute, to the presence of God. It is the confrontation with the wall, which apparently closes in on man, that opens up the way to the Lord. This may appear odd, for one might think that lifting up one's face to heaven, to the infinity of space, is the way to seek out God. Yet, the enclosing wall allows the praying person to focus the ardour of his belief and to seek God through inward concentration. It makes one think of God as a Being who is not remote, dwelling in heaven, but as there where He is addressed. Thus, the wall, rather than a means of separation, becomes a medium of communication, the communication of man with God.

The wall of Hezekiah has grown to enormous proportions in the Western Wall, or the Wailing Wall, as it is usually referred to in translation. The Western Wall is not a wall in a private room or even a room in a king's palace. It is the wall of the court of the Temple, and the symbolical remnant of that Temple. It is a symbol for a nation and a religion. Yet, it is a wall and people pray facing it, and they feel this place to be optimal for communicating with God, even to the point of leaving written messages to the Almighty in the cracks of the Wall, as some of the more naive believers do. The ardent prayer of Hezekiah, for life and health, has been repeated at this Wall countless times. The Western Wall can be called, if we may borrow modern phraseology, the grand medium of transcendental communication.

The communication, however, is not only between men and God. It is also a communication with the past, contact with the nation's ancient history. The Wall evokes the awareness of the era of two thousand years ago, when this same Wall was a wall of the Temple court. Touching the huge stones, with its chiselled margins, one goes back those two millennia; the sense of history turns from a theoretical notion into an actual experience.

It is this historical communication which finds a resonant chord not only in the minds of the religious, but also in the souls of the non-religious Israelis. To be sure, for the Orthodox, the contact with the past is not only historical, but also trans-historical: two millennia ago means the Temple, the abode of God, in full activity. It means religious life lived to the full. Yet, even the secular nostalgia of the non-religious, which recalls the early stage of independence and political sovereignty — even if it requires a further step backwards in time — is a potent stuff on which Jewish national awareness thrives.

This contact with the past, which the Wall conjures up, also provides a contact between the religious and non-religious Israelis. Whatever the mental association chosen by each group, the sentiments stirred by the Wall in each of them overlap to a great extent. And so, by coming to the same Wall, they feel closer to each other than they may in other circumstances of their daily life. The great chasm which seems to exist in present

Israel between the Orthodox and the non-religious is bridged by the Wall — at least at the moment of actual encounter there. Thus, again, the Wall, far from serving as a means of separation, works towards the unification of the people of Israel.

This is true also in respect of the various communal divisions in Israel: whatever the place of origin of the Israelis — East or West, Sepharad or Ashkenaz, Europe or North Africa or Middle East — the Wall is sacred to all, even if its sanctity is of a secular nature to some. This, of course, is true also in respect of the Jews of the Diaspora, who turn to the site of the Temple, represented by the Wall, in their prayer, wherever they may be, and who experience the same emotions as the Israelis do whenever they face the Wall on a visit to Israel. It is a unifying factor for Jews all over the world, whatever their Jewish persuasion may be — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Humanist.

The Wall does not only evoke the past. It also stands there as a means of communication with the future. For the Orthodox, the Wall represents the Temple of the remote past, as well as the Temple of the messianic days in the undetermined future — a future which may be remote, or may become a reality tomorrow. Indeed, the messianic era transcends the future, transcends the dimension of time, for it envisions a state of national, and universal, bliss which goes beyond any historical experience and which is to last for ever.

While the non-religious may not share this belief in a messianic fulfilment, for them, too, the Wall does not represent the past alone. The massive stones which combine into the Wall, which have stood there for two millennia, seem a monument which is not affected by time, which is impervious to change. The Wall is the point where Time and Space meet, where Time is encapsulated and immobilized in the tangible monument. The Wall comes to represent the immutable, the absolute. To be sure, the skeptic and the agnostic may be aware that this is an illusion, but he chooses not to push the merciless logic to the end, and stands in awe before the Wall which symbolizes the timeless and the eternal and which provides a tangible contact with that elusive idea.

There is another aspect to the Wall. It is a place where the individual prayers and the communal-national yearnings meet. There may be no connection between an individual prayer for health and the national quest for the arrival of Messiah. Yet, both are addressed to God on the same spot. Thus, the private and the public meet in harmony, a conjunction which is not too common — in Israel or elsewhere. *Volonté de tous*, the sum total of individual wishes, and *volonté générale*, the collective national will, to use Rousseau's famous distinction, are not on a collision course, are not in conflict, but coexist with one another and complement each other.

*

Beyond the Wall is the court of the destroyed Temple and in this court there are two ancient mosques, which continue to serve as a place of worship. Indeed, the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer right here, and his call, amplified by modern electronic devices, is not dimmed by the solid Wall.

The national and religious yearnings of the Jews may, in a vague sense, be directed at the restoration of the Temple on its original site, at the building of the Third Temple in the place of those destroyed by the Babylonians and the Romans in turn. Yet, these longings remain unfocused and there is no design to reach beyond the Wall into the court of the holy abode. This is not only because the site is occupied by Moslem houses of prayer, and the Moslems, after all, pushed out not the Jews but the Romans, the destroyers of the Temple, nor is it merely sour grapes on the part of the Jews in view of the concern of Islam for the Holy Mountain and its mosques.

The collective wisdom of Orthodox Jewry relegated the building of the Temple to messianic times. Until then neither the exact site of the altar can be determined, nor the laws of ritualistic purity be observed. In fact, the Orthodox consider it a sacrilege for a Jew even to visit the holy site of the Temple.

The less Orthodox could hardly contemplate a renewal of the ancient ritual which involves daily animal sacrifices. Even though that renewal is paid lip service in prayer, it is doubtful whether anyone but a marginal fringe of the Jewish world would be ready for such a renaissance. During nearly two millennia Judaism has progressed along a path in which prayer, rather than sacrifice, became the accepted way of communicating with God. Here, again, the Wall has proved adequate. The Wall is more appropriate than the splendour of the Temple, if you intend "to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

There is another advantage which the Wall has over the Temple. The Temple would be a symbol of the ultimate religious, and perhaps also national, fulfilment. The Wall remains the symbol of yearning for that ultimate fulfilment. Now, between fulfilment and longing for fulfilment, the latter may be preferable. For after fulfilment there remains nothing, while yearning sets no limits to aspiration and exploration. Yearning for bliss and perfection leaves the aspirants free to pursue their diverse dreams and objectives. The spectrum of Jews, from the most devout to the free-thinkers, can try to fulfill their respective dreams, whether messianic or not. They can follow their various ways to create a better Israel and a better world. There is more hope in such a process than in the final achievement.

Thus, once more, the Wall does not set a limit, it does not draw a boundary for human endeavour. It turns into a link to noble aspirations, it becomes a bridge to a better future.

Judaism As Tragic Religion

BERNARD OCH

JUDAISM IS A RELIGION WHICH REVOLVES around two distinct, opposite poles. One is the real — the reality within which the individual lives. The other is the ideal — the goal toward which the individual continuously strives. The former is the finite present of our lives and actions; the latter is the infinite future of our dreams and aspirations. The confrontation between these two opposing forces produces anxiety and tension in the life of the individual as he becomes aware of the tremendous gap which always exists between what he is and what he should be, between what he is doing and what he should be doing.

This confrontation between the real and the ideal is dialectic. The thesis is the finite reality; the antithesis is the infinite ideal. The clash between the two produces a synthesis which immediately becomes a new reality posited against the ideal which has not been fully realized.

In Judaism, the real-ideal dichotomy of human existence is embedded within the very nature of the universe and arises out of the fundamental metaphysical-cosmological dualism found in the Bible. "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the children of men" (Psalms 115:16).

This cosmological dualism is symbolically described in the very first chapter of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was chaotic and without form and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:1-2). The heavens symbolize the ideal realm of infinite, unlimited perfection. The earth symbolizes the world of limitation and imperfection — the chaotic, finite reality of human existence.

Each individual, as God's partner in creation, must not only transcend the earthly limits of the world, but also transform the earthly into the heavenly, transform the chaos and darkness of his life and his world into the order and harmony of perfection — a difficult, if not impossible, task. A task, moreover, which, of necessity, generates an ongoing and endless sense of anxiety and tension in the life of the individual.

This confrontation between the real and the ideal arises not only out of the cosmological dualism of creation but also from the very nature of man as created by God. "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Symbolically speaking, man is a

BERNARD OCH is Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at the Haifa University and Technion.

union of opposites. "The dust of the earth" symbolizes man's physical, finite existence — that which ties and limits him to the mundane realities of life; "the breath of life" symbolizes the spiritual aspect of man — that which compels him to transcend the boundaries of existing reality, to move from "what is" to "what should be."

The tragedy of man is that he was created a limited creature with unlimited horizons. He is the only creature that is not endowed with natural, instinctive mechanisms for shrinking his world down to a manageable size that he can automatically act on. He is a synthesis in which the finite ("dust of the earth") is the limiting factor and the infinite ("breath of life") is the expanding one.¹

The transition from essence to existence, from the essential nature of man to the historical condition in which he exists is symbolically described in the Garden of Eden story. The analogical meaning of this narrative is that the very structure of human existence brings about a transition from innocence to awareness, from harmony to discord in the life of each individual. Adam, who enters the garden, is God's creation, an innocent naive being with limited awareness and knowledge, who lives in complete harmony with the other creatures who inhabit that garden.

Adam who leaves the garden is a different being, no longer a creature of nature but a human created not only by God but by Adam himself. By eating the forbidden fruit, he acquires knowledge and consciousness, the awareness of pain and suffering which bring about a disruption in the basic harmony of God's creation. The price which Adam pays for eating of the Tree of Knowledge is disharmony and alienation, which engender feelings of guilt and anxiety. Adam is no longer "a part of," he is "apart from."

The Garden of Eden story is a paradigm that describes the path which each individual follows as he progresses from infancy to maturity. Like Adam, each human being eats of the Tree of Knowledge as he moves from innocence to awareness, from sameness to separateness, and from harmony to discord. Like Adam, he feels alone and separated from God, from his fellow man, and from nature. His deepest striving is to recapture the original state of harmony by creating a world of perfection and wholeness, based not on a primordial innocence but on awareness and knowledge. The tragedy of human existence is that man, as a finite and limited creature, is ill-equipped and unable to accomplish this "godly" task.

Up to this point, we have attempted to delineate the tragic element in existence in its broadly human and not specifically Jewish context. The

1. This description of man as a synthesis of two distinct elements should not be confused with the body-soul dichotomy in Christianity. In Judaism, the body is not identified with evil and sin. It is not the physical prison which constrains and corrupts the pure, immortal soul. It is, rather, the God-given physical form through which man is to express and actualize his humanness and potential. God's nearness and concern for man are expressed in the image of the Creator who shaped man with His own hands.

uniqueness of Judaism lies in the application of this tragic principle to the life and destiny of a specific people, and in the various attempts made by Judaism to bridge the chasm between finite reality and ideal perfection.

The initial reference in the Bible to the real-ideal confrontation in the history of the Jewish people occurs when God reveals to Abraham His intention to create a chosen people. "And the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your homeland and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation . . .'" (Genesis 12:1-2). At the age of seventy-five, Abraham is commanded to leave his home and to journey "to the land that I will show you." For Abraham, this journey is from the real to the ideal, a journey which always takes the individual, like Abraham, out of the realm of the known and into the realm of the unknown. For the ideal is always an unknown, a mystery — a point which we shall return to further on.

At the age of seventy-five, Abraham is commanded to leave his home. But what is his real home? Not Ur of the Chaldeans, but the land of Canaan, not where Abraham came out from but where he is going. "Home" is not a place in the past whence you came but a destination in the future to which you are going. By transferring the location of "home" in this way, the Bible is inferring that "home" is that place where an individual and a people fulfill their mission and destiny.² A sharp distinction is made between the physical, natural home and the spiritual, idealistic one. The former is a given, a fact of history; the latter is a mission, an act of will and destiny.

The Bible states very clearly that the land of Israel is, essentially, the spiritual home of the Jewish people, spiritual in the sense that it is the land which God has chosen to serve as the physical framework where His people are to realize a specific goal and mission, namely, to fulfill His covenant and live as a holy nation. Actual possession of the land has thereby become conditional, contingent on the spiritual life that the people live in the land. If they remain faithful to God, they will remain in the land. However, if they reject God, the land will reject them and they will forfeit their right to possession. The line which stretches from the physical to the spiritual home is the line between the real and the ideal.³

This disparity between the search for the ideal and its realization is related in the Bible to that concept which defines the very essence of the Jewish people, the concept of "holiness." It served as the basis for the Bib-

2. It is interesting to note that also in Hebrew the words for destination — *ya'ad* and *ye'ud* are etymologically connected.

3. The "homelessness" of man is one of the implicit ideas underlying the Biblical narrative. In striving for the infinite ideal, man tears himself away from his earthly grounding. The inevitable failure to realize the ideal leaves man suspended between "heaven" and "earth." It is only by ceasing to strive for the ideal, and by limiting himself exclusively to mundane matters that man can safely feel that he is "at home." For the Jewish people, however, this is a denial of their destiny and inevitably leads to a forfeiting of their destination, namely exile from the land of Israel.

lical story of the rebellion of Korah against Moses. During the sojourn in the desert, Korah incited two hundred and fifty leaders of the people to challenge Moses' authority and leadership.

And they assembled against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the Lord is among them; why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord? (Numbers 16:3).

Korah's accusation against Moses was based on the claim that the people themselves were holy. Inasmuch as the entire people had already acquired the status of holiness, Moses had no right to raise himself above them as their leader. Korah's claim was the exact antithesis to what Moses had been proclaiming to the people, not that they were holy but that they should become holy! For Moses, holiness was the ideal towards which the people of Israel must continually strive. It was not a quality which the people possessed but a goal which must be endlessly sought and yet never attained. In Judaism, the attribution of the status of holiness to an object, individual or people is the essence of idolatry and an act of rebellion against God. It is not the acquisition of holiness, but the endless striving for it, as articulated by Moses in the words "you shall be holy," which is the mission that God has placed upon His chosen people.

The most striking example of the unattainability of the ideal is to be found in the life of Moses, himself, the reluctant prophet who was compelled by God to leave the security of his father-in-law's home and return to Egypt. He didn't want to go and besought God to send someone else, but God had made up His mind. It was Moses who would return to Egypt to lead His people out of bondage and into the promised land. And therein lies the tragic irony of Moses' mission. The people who left the land of Egypt would never enter the promised land, and neither would their leader. Entrance into the land of Canaan becomes the unobtainable goal not only for the generation which left Egypt but also for Moses, who had been specifically chosen by God to fulfill this very goal.

One of the explanations why the generation which left Egypt failed to remain faithful to God and enter the land of Canaan was that they had been corrupted by years of slavery. But what of the next generation? — those born and raised in the desert, uncorrupted by the years of slavery in Egypt — the generation which had been brought up by Moses on the teachings of the Torah, a generation which was uniquely qualified to fulfill the mission placed upon it by God.

Once again, we see that the goal was not to be realized. The mission placed by God on the children of Israel was not only to enter and conquer the land of Canaan, but, also, to dwell within the land in obedience to His covenant, thereby transforming the land of Canaan into the promised land. This, however, was precisely what the generation born in the desert was unable to do. Conquer and settle the land — yes! Fulfill God's covenant and live securely in the land — no!

The tragic inevitability of this failure is starkly described in the last chapters of the book of Deuteronomy.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold you are about to sleep with your fathers; then this people will rise and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger will be kindled against them and I will forsake them and hide My face from them and they will be devoured. . . . For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them and despise Me and break My covenant" (Deuteronomy 31:16-20).

For our purposes, it does not matter when the book of Deuteronomy was actually written. What is important is that, in the context of the Biblical narrative, these words are spoken by God before the children of Israel enter the land of Canaan. They are an ominous prediction of the inevitability of failure. The very generation which was raised and nurtured by God and Moses in the desert, uncontaminated by foreign, idolatrous influences, will be unable to remain faithful to God. The ideal will remain, by necessity, unfulfilled. This is a fact which both God and Moses recognize and convey to the people prior to their entering the land.

For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and in the days to come, evil will befall you because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger through the work of your hands (Deuteronomy 31:29).

This is the tragic legacy which Moses leaves with the people prior to his death.

Judaism places an additional qualification upon the ongoing and endless quest for the ideal, for not only is it unobtainable, it is also unknowable. The ideal always remains amorphous and mysterious; it can never be clearly and precisely defined. It is not only beyond the individual's physical grasp, it is also beyond his intellectual comprehension.

Let us read once again the words of God's charge to Abraham. "Go from your country, your homeland and your father's house to the land that I will show you." God commands Abraham to leave the security and familiarity of his past and to follow Him into the future to an undefined destination. To be chosen by God means to leave the known and familiar and move towards the unknown and mysterious — to follow, in complete faith, on a path whose destination cannot be clearly seen, which leads to the unpredictable.

Abraham's journey brought him eventually, and inevitably, to Mount Moriah. And once again God commanded Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice upon one of the mountains which I shall show you" (Genesis 22:2). Once again Abraham is commanded to journey toward an

unknown destination. To be chosen means to move in a certain direction without knowing what lies at the end of the journey.

This indefinable and unknowable ideal is referred to not only in the life of Abraham but also in the person of Moses. Let us ask a very old and simple question. Why does Moses stammer? Of all the heroic figures in the Bible, why is it only Moses who is "slow of speech and heavy of tongue"? I would like to suggest that this stammering is not an incidental characteristic of Moses' personality but an essential aspect of the role which God has chosen for him. Moses stammers not out of accident but out of necessity. For what is Moses? He is the prophet of God, the prophet par excellence, the one man chosen by God to reveal His Torah to the children of Israel. This is Moses' unique function — to be the mouth of God. When you and I speak, we express our own thoughts and feelings. When the prophet speaks, he expresses the word of God. Though this is the prophet's uniqueness, it is also Moses' deficiency. The very vehicle that God has chosen to reveal His word to the people is, in and of itself, defective, incapable of transmitting that word in a clear and precise fashion. The word of God, the ideal, the truth, they exist. But what we, as human beings, can grasp and understand of them will always be an unclear, stammering copy of the original. What starts out as divine truth must always end up as human uncertainty and fallibility.⁴

It is relatively easy to write of an ideal which can never be fully realized nor clearly defined, of a God who created the world, who chose a people and placed upon them an impossible task, a mission which they can never fulfill. Yes, it is easy to write about this, but how does one live with it? How do people live with the inevitability of failure and frustration, knowing that, no matter how hard they struggle, they will never achieve the divinely appointed goal? The answer is simple. A people cannot live this way. And, so, the very God who demands the impossible must provide His people with the possibility and hope for fulfillment and redemption. The burden of inevitable failure must be lightened lest the people collapse under its heavy load.

The Jewish religion made two major attempts to reduce that tragic inevitability and to place the ideal within the grasp of the individual and the people. Both entailed the entrance of God into the process of history, thereby drastically changing its course and inevitability. The first was the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which served a twofold purpose.

4. Whatever direct knowledge we receive from God through revelation must always remain incomplete because it is mediated through the limited, finite constructs of human understanding and imagination. The complete, absolute truth will always remain a transcendent unknown. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). The inaccessibility of divine truth does not make the belief in revelation meaningless. It can, however, perform the indispensable function of relativizing and limiting all human claims to absolute knowledge.

Firstly, to provide the children of Israel with a detailed blueprint of how to fulfill God's covenant and achieve their mission. Secondly, to bind God to a specifically worded contract, thereby limiting God's unpredictability by placing divine punishment within the recognizable and acceptable parameters of obedience or disobedience to God's laws. This dual purpose was, however, not to be achieved. The attempt to define and concretize the ideal through the revelation was, of itself, doomed to frustration, for the tragic inevitability of failure permeates the theophany at Sinai.

At the very moment that God was revealing the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel were dancing around the golden calf. The very generation which was chosen by God to receive His Torah, which witnessed His miracles in Egypt, which heard His voice at Sinai, and proclaimed, as one, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do," this generation became the paradigm of all future generations who would be unable to remain faithful to the word and covenant of God, an ironic interpretation of the dictum: "The acts of the fathers are signs for the children." The theophany at Sinai, rather than reducing the gap between the real and the ideal, becomes the example par excellence of the inability of the people to achieve their goal and mission. The children of Israel departed Sinai bound to a covenant which they, and future generations, would be unable to keep, the harsh implication being that the observance of the covenant was beyond the nature of the people as they were then constituted.

The ideal of obedience and faithfulness will be achieved only when God grants his people a new heart and a new covenant. The concept of a new covenant which would drastically change the relationship between God and His people was described by the prophet Jeremiah.

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel, says the Lord: I will put My law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

A new covenant will bring about the reconciliation between God and Israel, but, until then, the inevitability of disobedience and failure remains the destiny of the people.

The second attempt to place the ideal within the framework of reality was the belief in the Messiah and the Messianic era. Once again, the God who had appeared at Sinai would reenter history and reestablish the original harmony and perfection of creation. The long-awaited ideal would finally be realized. The people of Israel are promised by God that the ideal of perfection will someday be established on earth.

There are, however, a number of qualifications appended to the Messianic belief which seriously limit its effectiveness as a counterpoise to the suffering and frustration of the people. Firstly, the coming of the

Messiah is projected into the distant future. Unlike Christianity, where Messianic redemption is placed at the center of the historical process as an event having already transpired, Judaism places the Messianic era at the end of history as its final aim. The belief in the Messiah, therefore, remains an unfulfilled promise which, in itself, becomes an ironic commentary on the harshness of the suffering that it has come to alleviate.⁵

Secondly, the belief in Messianic redemption as a public event which will transpire on the stage of history is predicated on the belief in God's intervention into the historical process. Despite the many and even conflicting interpretations in Judaism concerning the nature and scope of this divine intervention, the basic fact remains that final redemption is dependent on the will of God and not only on the actions of men. Consequently, the belief in Messianic redemption is, for the most part, divested of its predictability and imminence.

These are the two major attempts in Judaism to bridge the gap between the real and ideal, to provide the people with a path to be followed in the present and a hope for the future. But nothing has actually changed, for the ideal remains beyond the grasp of the people of Israel, a people which has been chosen by God to journey endlessly toward a goal which they can never physically realize nor visually conceptualize.

There is, however, one individual in the Bible who, because of his greatness, is granted by God the privilege of seeing the ideal even though he will not achieve it, and this is Moses. At the end of his life, he is summoned by God to the top of Mount Nebo.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo . . . and view the land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel for a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend . . . For you shall see the land before you; but you shall not go there" (Deuteronomy 32:48-52).

This is God's blessing to Moses, who will not enter the promised land but will see it from the top of Mount Nebo. Moses is, indeed, blessed, for he, at least, clearly sees the ideal toward which he has been striving all his life. The children of Israel are not similarly blessed. They shall neither see nor achieve their ideal. The people will enter the land, conquer it but not possess it. They will be expelled from the land and wander on the face of the earth, driven by an ideal and a mission which they can neither realize nor visualize, covenanted to a God whose word they can never fully comprehend or obey. This is the tragic destiny of the Jewish people.

5. Another distinction concerning the possibility of a final realization of the ideal is that Christianity conceives of redemption as occurring within the inner, spiritual world of the individual without anything necessarily having to transpire in the outer world of reality. Judaism, by contrast, always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which occurs on the stage of history, within the context of the visible world. Consequently, there can be no possibility of reconciling the real-ideal dichotomy by recourse to a belief in the realization of the ideal in the inner life of the individual. Furthermore, Judaism viewed the Christian belief in an inner redemption as an attempt to avoid historical, empirical verification of the Messianic claims.

The Teachings of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus

R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: A Scholar Outcast. By Y. D. GILAT. Ramat Gan, Israel. Bar Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture, 1984.

Reviewed by BARUCH M. BOKSER

YITZHAK GILAT, one of the most thoughtful Israeli Talmudists, has written extensively on the history of Jewish law and institutions. With an exciting freshness, he traces the diverse transformations that individual laws or practices may have undergone in the pre-rabbinic, mishnaic, amoraic, and the post-talmudic periods. He considers the impact of historical factors, in particular the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Noting that early rabbinic Judaism post-70 C.E. often diverged from pre-70 Judaism, he points to the ways that rabbis reacted to the destruction by restructuring the earlier heritage to enable religious practices to function without the Temple cult. While one may occasionally differ as to the methods appropriate to describe and account for the changes, his attempts always highlight key issues and his interpretations are always stimulating.

Gilat's concerns are well represented in *R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*, a beautifully produced English translation of his (unrevised) 1968 Hebrew volume, *The Teachings of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and their Position in the History of the Halakah*. The Hebrew title provides an accurate description of the work. Analyzing the legal teachings of Eliezer, a first-century, post-Destruction master, Gilat seeks to demonstrate that they represent the pre-70 halakhah or "old law"

which was also often transmitted by the House of Shammai. The early rabbinic movement departed from this "old law" in the course of working out a new approach to Judaism. To make this argument, Gilat lucidly surveys what he believes are the methods of Eliezer's exegesis and then his teachings on prayer and blessings, Sabbath and *eruv*, precepts of Passover and the other festivals, and the laws of mourning, defilement and purity. He concludes by discussing the impact of custom and of political, social, and economic conditions on Eliezer and his relationship to the House of Shammai and to R. Yohanan ben Zakkai.

While the volume offers a superb introduction to early rabbinic law and the transitional period of the late first century, it does not *prove* its central point. Explaining why this is so should illuminate the problems confronting all studies of rabbinic Judaism. Basic to Gilat's work is the assumption that what Eliezer said goes back to his predecessors. Gilat struggles with the oft-quoted statement regarding Eliezer "that [he] never spoke a word that he did not hear" [from his teachers] (*Tosefta Yebamot* 3; b. *Yoma* 66b.) Yet, while recognizing that Eliezer innovates, Gilat sharply limits the range of that innovation:

R. Eliezer regarded reason and logic as decisive factors in determining the law insofar as they did not override a clear halakhah which he had received and he employed them in deciding practical halakhot (p. 127).

This is the key, for if Eliezer did not teach anything new, once we identify his masters we should know what those masters had said. The issue, however, is: Can we judge the corpus of a master by what some statements (which themselves may be later glosses) say about all the teachings without first assaying those teachings themselves?

BARUCH M. BOKSER is associate professor of Early Rabbinic Studies at Dropsie College.

Gilat insightfully reviews the laws, but, since he consistently tailors the discussion to prove that Eliezer transmits the “old law,” he repeatedly must enter into speculation. Not surprisingly, Jacob Neusner (in *Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*, 1973) and David Halivni (in *Meqorot uMesorot*, 1968-) and other scholars who have analyzed these sources have often suggested alternative ways to explain the history of individual teachings. This is not to say that Eliezer’s traditions do not illuminate pre-rabbinic or Pharisaic teaching. Indeed, a comparison of all the teachings of Eliezer with those of the earlier Pharisees demonstrates, as Neusner has shown, that, in general, both treat the same legal subjects but not many topics that the developing rabbinic movement focused on in the later first and second centuries (2:138-42). A convergence of topics, however, does not prove that Eliezer and his predecessors agree on specifics. Eliezer may develop laws and deduce principles not previously articulated. Gilat himself points to Eliezer systematizing various cultic laws, as if to preserve them for the future.

To Gilat’s credit, since many scholars have made their research on rabbinic Judaism into a description of the narrative life of a master, he provides an important corrective. Most of the material dealing with Eliezer is legal traditions and they should form the primary sources for a study on him. Indeed, where Gilat veers from his own commitment to analyze the legal teachings and treats the non-legal or narrative depictions of Eliezer, he opens himself up to the morass of the later, amoraic conceptions about Eliezer when most of the narrative accounts surface.

In searching for Eliezer’s intellectual heritage, Gilat makes use of all the traditions attributed to him, irrespective of the date of the

source in which they are found — not only the Mishnah, Tosefta, and halakhic midrashim, but, also, beraitot and statements found in the two gemarot and the later midrashim. But, to study the history of the law, it would be preferable, following Neusner’s model in assessing the historical significance of the traditions, to examine the earliest sources first and separately, analyzing them even internally to see which of Eliezer’s views were known in the early and then late second century. To be sure, because the rabbinic legal sources in general are conservative and, as Neusner has demonstrated regarding Eliezer, they do *not* attribute to Eliezer legal teachings on themes with which he had not been earlier associated, Gilat’s unrestricted citations do provide a picture of the *ongoing* tradition or image of Eliezer. They reveal how Eliezer’s opinions may have been further developed by those who transmitted them. Moreover, since Gilat compares Eliezer to other masters, his picture supports the growing consensus that Rabbinic Judaism did not make up a monolithic whole — and this holds even if we would prefer to see the diversity not just in terms of “the old” versus “the new” halakhah.

To summarize, Gilat’s own observation that we should not automatically follow the later rabbinic casting of Eliezer as a Shammaite — for that may reflect, in part, as he demonstrates, a later judgment (474-78) — should prompt us to evaluate all of the perceptions of Eliezer. Similarly, the controversy surrounding Eliezer that led to his exclusion from the rabbinic group, as an “outcast,” and the supposed temporary suppression of his teachings or of his authorship, by not appending his name in the chain of attribution that preceded his traditions, and the means that some authorities

employed to circumvent these practices should indicate that the supplying of an attribution is not a simple matter. Rather, the concerns of later authorities may have influenced the way in which Eliezer was portrayed or his teachings transmitted. Taking into account these issues might, therefore, help explain outstanding problems such as: Why was Eliezer spoken of and cited when he was? If Yohanan ben Zakkai was his teacher, why does Eliezer never directly quote Yohanan's legal opinions and why do Eliezer and Yohanan address so widely different topics?

What we can say at this point is that Eliezer appears as a transi-

tional figure whose intellectual interests are close to those of the Pharisees. But, despite Gilat's efforts, the nature of the so called "old law" remains unclear, for his argument can, at most, only illustrate a hypothesis, be it insightful or suggestive, concerning pre-70 Judaism. Yet, the volume remains important. Gilat's analysis of the legal teachings provides a rich source that can be profitably mined if it is approached without preconceived notions. Moreover, Gilat has appropriately demonstrated that one must base a study of the formation of early rabbinic Judaism on the primary evidence, the legal sources.

Jewish Faith and Heidegger

The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporal Election. By MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD. Minneapolis, Minn. The Seabury Press, 1983.

Reviewed by NORBERT M. SAMUELSON

MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD's book is an important work in contemporary Jewish theology by a committed Orthodox Jew who is a serious philosopher. Wyschogrod uses his critical mind and his extensive knowledge of one of the most influential philosophers in this decade — Martin Heidegger — to discuss many of the major issues of Jewish faith today. The informed reader should find this book to be clear, well-reasoned, creative, sometimes disturbing, and often

exciting, a work of unquestionable importance.

Among the major topics that Wyschogrod adeptly discusses are the limits of reason within Judaism, Israel as the chosen people, the nature and value of sacrifice, divine attributes, divine love, Jewish ethics and law, messianism, and the relation of both philosophy and art to Judaism. In dealing with these themes, he brings to bear his professional knowledge, as a philosopher, of the religious thought of Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Buber, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Heidegger, as well as his Judaic knowledge of classical rabbinic literature, Kabbalah, and modern Jewish thought.

There is no way to summarize, within the constraints of this review, every interesting claim that Wyschogrod makes, but at least the following should be noted: There is both a light and a dark side to knowledge. The dark side is the background beyond which mere human intellect cannot penetrate without the aid of revelation. It is the revelation at Sinai that teaches

NORBERT M. SAMUELSON is chairman of the International Academy for Jewish Philosophy, an associate professor at Temple University and director of both graduate religion studies and Jewish studies at Temple.

us the faith beyond which our reason cannot reach. That limit is practical, i.e., what we are permitted to know deals more with what we should do than with what ultimately is the case. In other words, the proper domain for human thought is ethics and not metaphysics. However, the appropriate ethics of Judaism is not a Kantian autonomous system. Rather, Jewish ethics are heteronomous. It is solely the will of God that legitimates the obligations of mankind in general and Jews in particular.

To know God's will is to know what the Torah reveals, and to understand the Torah the Jew must turn to the system of rabbinic law. But the Jew must never forget that it is the word of God and not the word of the rabbis that is binding. Consequently, Judaism must always face, and live with, the insecurity that properly arises when it realizes that even in the desire to obey God's will the Jewish people may, in fact, be disobedient.

Based on this analysis and on his reading of Jewish history, Wyschogrod concludes that, in the case of Judaism, unlike Christianity, theology (the conceptual analysis of God's nature and purpose) is a peripheral enterprise. Consequently, since we, as human beings, are not permitted to know what God is, there is no reason to follow the tradition from Maimonides that reinterprets all corporeal references to God. Furthermore, since we cannot know why God does what He does, there cannot be, and need not be, any explanation of why God chose Israel. The only answer, which explains nothing, is that God loves Israel, and we know this because Scripture tells us so. God's abode (*makom*) is in the Jewish people. All of the people — the good and the bad, the observant and the secular — are holy, and they function in history as the physical manifestation of God's role in

the world. Hence, through choice rather than by necessity, God has tied the salvation of humanity to the salvation of Israel.

What I found to be most exciting in this book was Wyschogrod's critique of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (Chapter 4). This chapter in itself is a work of major importance for any contemporary scholar who take seriously the tradition of continental philosophy. Heidegger is a giant in a philosophical tradition that runs from Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, through Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, to Husserl and contemporary phenomenology. It is a tradition of central importance to Jewish thought, since it is the philosophical framework of at least Buber and Rosenzweig in the last decade and most Jewish philosophers, including Emil Fackenheim, in our own time. For Wyschogrod, this direction in thought is the only important contemporary approach to philosophy. The tradition culminates with Martin Heidegger, and his involvement with the Nazis flowed naturally from his philosophy. In other words, the thought in Heidegger's *Being and Time* is philosophy at its best, and following this "best philosophy" is at least consistent with becoming a Nazi.

Some scholars may object that Wyschogrod's analysis of Heidegger's philosophy is not correct. Others will consider the analysis to be a *reductio ad absurdum* against the viability of the continental philosophical tradition. And still others will agree with him that this kind of analysis demonstrates the limitations of philosophy as such. Emil Fackenheim should be classified among those who fall within the third category. I would place myself in the second grouping. Jewish thinkers have preferred the tradition of continental phenomenology to that of Anglo-linguistic analysis because (1) the latter has so

far exhibited a strong anti-religious bias, and (2) the former has been the tradition of Jewish philosophy for at least the past century. However, the past choice may have had more to do with the fact that the Jewish philosophers were German than with any inherent virtues of the philosophy itself. Furthermore, given, for the sake of argument, that there is an inherent bias against religion in the British tradition of philosophy from Locke, Berkeley and Hume through Russell and Wittgenstein, and that these two contemporary traditions are our only alternatives (an assumption that I do not share, since I find in pre-Cartesian, medieval Jewish philosophy an alternative, viable basis for contemporary Jewish philosophy), a tradition that has an anti-religious bias is preferable to one that, because it can make its peace with Nazis, is inherently immoral and anti-Semitic.

I, for one, also disagree with Wyschogrod's judgment that, from the perspective of Jewish history, philosophy is peripheral to Judaism, although in this case I suspect that most contemporary Jews will agree with him and disagree with me. As I understand Judaism, it is, and always has been, one way of working out in the detail the meaning of the Torah, whose equivocal statements provide a starting point from which Jews attempt to do everything that they ought to do (the so-called obligations of the body [*hovot ha-guf*]) and to know everything that can be known (the obligations of the heart or mind [*hovot ha-levavot*]). The earliest classical rabbis (viz., those of the periods of the Mishnah and the Talmuds) rigorously determined the system of Jewish behavior in the world, i.e., what Jews ought to do, and the later classical rabbis (viz., the so-called medieval Jewish philosophers) turned their attention to the system of Jewish thought about

the world, i.e., what Jews ought to believe. However, the *tannaim* and *amoraim* also discussed philosophy and theology, the Jewish philosophers also dealt with ethics and law, and all of these topics properly belong together, in the unity of what is called classical rabbinic Judaism.

Both systems were developed to determine what God commanded, but at this point the parallel between them ends. While observance admits of multiple degrees, it is possible for any Jew to observe the precepts of Judaism at the most advanced level. Similarly, with the aid of a rabbi any Jew can learn what it is that he/she ought to do. Yet this is not the case with belief, which equally admits to multiple degrees, but its most sophisticated levels are accessible to only a relative minority of Jews who have both the ability and the opportunity to study. Hence, the obligations of the mind cannot be commanded in the same way as behavior. People cannot be commanded to do what is not within their power to do. Consequently, when the rabbis determined what a Jew ought and ought not to do, that determination had the force of a universal commandment; but when the rabbis also determined what a Jew ought and ought not to believe, that determination could not have a similar force. "You ought to do such and such" entails that you should do it; but "you ought to believe such and such" cannot entail that you should believe it if you cannot understand it and/or you are not convinced that it is true.¹

Modern Jewish thinkers have used this disparity between rabbinic determinations of behavior and belief to argue in one way or another that Judaism is a religion of practice rather than of belief. To a certain extent, Wyschogrod's analysis of the relationship between reason and Judaism falls

into this purely modern tradition of apologetics that attempted to remove traditional Judaism from the force of modern intellectual criticism, but that is a distortion of the history of Judaism.

What I find to be most disturbing in this book is Wyschogrod's constant use of Jewish stereotypes and the cavalier way that he dismisses alternative approaches to Judaism with which he does not agree. Would that he had shown the same depth of understanding and rigor in analysis in his treatment of secular American Jewish literature and liberal Judaism that he showed in his discussions of Christianity and Martin Heidegger. For example, he tells us that the religious community should see its divorce from the world of Jewish artists as a serious problem and should attempt to overcome this separation. However, he himself contributes nothing to bridging the gap. In the entire work there is only one reference to a Jewish artist, viz., on pg. 27, Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, which is cited as an example of Jewish "self-loathing." But he makes no attempt to examine, in the writings of Roth or other Jewish novelists and poets of Roth's generation, their struggle to come to terms with their self-conscious Jewishness within their secular American identity.

Wyschogrod's treatment of liberal Judaism is no better. He tells us that the "primary interest" of the reformers was "to integrate their Judaism with German culture" (pg. 190), and that Reform Judaism arose "to justify *de jure* what had long been the case *de facto*," viz., that Jews had abandoned *halacha* (pg. 231). In other words, Reform Judaism was nothing more than an attempt to rationalize modern Jewish assimilation. Now, undoubtedly, many Jews will agree with this characterization, but they are not

Jews who have an especially profound knowledge of the movement. In his concluding chapter he tells us that, within Orthodoxy, there is a real danger of a lack of moral and aesthetic consciousness, and, based on this awareness, he calls for a Jewish renewal. Yet, this very consciousness lies at the heart of the development of Reform Judaism, which arose precisely as an attempt at renewal. Jews did not need Reform Judaism in order to assimilate; they did this on their own. The reformers wedded the elements from their general and Jewish civilizations that they affirmed while they removed from both elements what they denied, not because of what gentiles thought, but because of what they, themselves, believed. Like many Jews of their generation, they found much in traditional Judaism to be wrong on intellectual, moral and/or aesthetic grounds. But, unlike most of their fellow Jews, they struggled to develop a third alternative to total acceptance and rejection, for, given that option, their intellectual-moral-aesthetic sensitivity would have demanded that they reject Judaism altogether.

To his credit, Wyschogrod acknowledges that Israel includes all of the Jewish people, and not just the religious Orthodox. But he fails to see that this unity demands that he listen to alternative Jewish voices with at least the same sensitivity that he hears Christians and a pagan German philosopher. This is the primary weakness of the book which, in practically every other respect, is a major contribution to modern Jewish thought.

NORBERT M. SAMUELSON
Philadelphia, PA

1. See, for example, Menachem M. Kellner's Introduction to Isaac Abravanel's *Principles of Faith* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1982), pp. 17-50.

No Established Religion

The First Liberty. Religion and the American Republic. By WILLIAM LEE MILLER. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1986.

Reviewed by SAMUEL RABINOVE

NEXT YEAR, as we know, America will be celebrating a milestone, the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. After almost two hundred years, one might imagine that the vital lessons imparted by the religious freedom clauses of the First Amendment — “the first of the First” — would have been fully internalized by the citizenry. Would that it were so. Most people, it would seem, do pay “lip service” to freedom of conscience, as well as to the Constitutional principle of separation of church and state. (A recent opinion poll, alas, indicated that approximately one-fourth of the American people acknowledge that they do *not* believe in the separation principle.) Yet even those who do profess to believe in it often hold views which are not easy to reconcile with such a belief. For one obvious example, a decisive majority of Americans, according to all the polls, would favor overturning the U.S. Supreme Court rulings in the *Engel* and *Schempp* cases, so as to restore organized, school-sponsored prayer in public schools, on a “voluntary” basis, of course. For another illustration, a substantial number of Americans apparently see no violation of the church-state separation principle in state funding of church schools, whose chief reason for being is to propagate a religious faith.

So there is a real need, as we approach the bicentennial, for a book like *The First Liberty*. The

problem, however, is that few of those who really ought to read it are likely to do so. But those of us who believe that religions in America will flourish best if government essentially keeps its hands off, neither to help nor to hinder, would do well to read it, if only to deepen our awareness of the origins and significance of the First Amendment's religion clauses.

William Lee Miller, a journalist, author and former teacher at Yale Divinity School, is presently Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. He has given us a book that is notably unpretentious, lively, readable and quotable, as well as highly authoritative in its grasp of the voluminous literature on this subject. Writing from the perspective of a committed Christian who is equally committed to freedom of conscience for all, Miller illuminates his subject brightly by focusing, in turn, on Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Roger Williams. One might open to almost any page for fresh and arresting insights into the early American experience with diverse religions, their leaders, and their shifting relationships with, and attitudes toward, government.

Miller begins with the story of Thomas Jefferson's landmark Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the hard struggle to get it adopted, finally, in the face of a firestorm of opposing views, in 1786. In his words: “With this statute Virginia became the first state to end by law all forms of official religious persecution and exclusion and compulsion — to break with the whole ugly history of the use of state power to punish, enforce, suppress, and enact religious beliefs.” Having said this, however, the author notes that “the same Assembly that passed Jefferson's religious liberty bill also passed a statute requiring the observance of Sunday as a day of

SAMUEL RABINOVE is *Legal Director of the American Jewish Committee.*

rest." Jefferson, in Miller's assessment, was by far "the most important of the Founders intellectually speaking;" his renown is richly deserved.

Next comes an extended treatment of the seminal role (still undervalued, according to Miller) played by James Madison in shaping our expansive tradition of religious liberty for all. In his view, Madison was "the most important Founder institutionally speaking," and his *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, written in 1785, is a "work of relentless advocacy" and "conceptual power" where "one can find the full expression of the views of . . . the author, more or less, of the First Amendment."

But what about the actual meaning of the words of the Establishment Clause? Did the First Congress mean strict separation, or merely that no single church can be established and no sect receive preference by government over others? The controversy is a heated one which persists to this very day. Miller observes that Madison's original clause on religion included the words ". . . nor shall any national religion be established . . ." But Madison evidently interpreted the word "national" very broadly. As Miller notes: "When he opposed tax-supported congressional chaplains, he said they would represent the establishment of a 'national' religion." (As we know, Madison lost on that one.) In any event, an alternative to Madison's initial wording was offered by Samuel Livermore of New Hampshire: "Congress shall make no law touching religion . . .", whereupon Madison withdrew his own proposed language. Livermore's language actually passed the House, 34 to 20. In the Senate, Miller reminds us, amendments were offered to the House language that would merely have barred "prefer-

ence of one religious group over another . . . but those proposals were twice rejected." The final language, familiar to us, emerged from a meeting of the conference committee of the two houses of Congress: "Congress shall make no law Respecting an Establishment of Religion . . ." Exactly what was in the minds of the members of the First Congress may never be totally known but, Miller concludes, most of them did intend to go further than simply barring preference for any one religious group.

The third major figure dealt with in depth in this book is Roger Williams, who clearly is not nearly as well known to most Americans as are Jefferson and Madison. Miller fills this void admirably. "Roger Williams," he writes, "was a very strong and persistent opponent of the ancient and persistent evil of killing and persecuting people for reasons of religion . . . at a time when very few others were." During the seventeenth century, for example, the Catholic Church was generally seen by Puritans and many others (including Williams himself) as the Anti-Christ and as a Satanic perversion. As Miller puts it, it was seen as ". . . the whore of Babylon, the concentrate and epitome of all that had intervened between the true Christian religion of the New Testament and the polluted world of bishops, popes, earthly powers that had evolved since Constantine made Christianity the official religion of Rome."

Yet despite his own deep hostility to the Catholic Church, Roger Williams defended the right of conscience for "papists." And, as for the Jews, says the author: "Among all the Christian commonwealths in all the history of Western 'Christendom,' the prime test would be, how was it for the Jews? In Roger Williams's Rhode Island, it was soul freedom." That is why the Touro Synagogue in Newport

today is a national historic shrine.

In the fourth part of the book, "Reflections After Two Centuries," Miller offers a number of incisive observations about Judaism, Jews and even Israel. Some of them deserve quoting, as follows:

- But Judaism has an importance to the American religiopolitical drama out of all proportion to its numerical membership — a distinct, complex, and essential relation to the central American tradition of religious liberty, and potentially to the American problem of the cultural-moral underpinnings of republican government as well.
- Although the Nazi madness was fired by an anti-Christian — "pagan" — ideology, the backdrop for the Holocaust, for making Jews the primary, although not the sole, victims of the mass killings, was a culture saturated with Christian teaching.
- But Israel also may represent to American, and world, Jewry after the Holocaust a kind of grim realism. Let us

say it is a practical principle that can be extracted from James Madison, extended to the scale of the *world*: Avoid depending entirely on the structure of conscience, goodwill, even law; secure a realistic basis for your own protection, too.

- The strong endorsement of separation of church and state in America by religious Jews is sometimes hard for conservative Christians to understand. Some of the latter associate thoroughgoing church-state separation with aggressive, "unbelieving" secularism. But religious Jews have their reasons that are not "secular" at all.

In sum, this is a book, filled with historical truths and imbued with generosity of spirit, that is surely worth the attention of people who care deeply about freedom of conscience. The publisher quotes church-state authority, Professor Edwin S. Gaustad of the University of California, as follows: "Written with verve and sweep, this timely volume will reach a wild (sic) audience." Let us hope it reaches some tamer readers, too.

*Susquehanna University Press
of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania*

"Mature Christianity is the most careful study of the anti-Jewish polemic of the New Testament that I have read. By placing his discussion in the context of Maturity and Hermeneutics, Beck gets deeper than the other books on this polemic. He is well versed in the relevant exegetical discussion in New Testament scholarship, and his attention to anti-Jewish polemic in various English translations of the Bible is excellent. Worth discussing further in the light of critical studies of the development of Jewish and of Christian theology is his daring analogy between Yahweh and Jesus."

—Krister Stendahl, Bishop of Stockholm, Church of Sweden; former Andrew W. Mellon Professor of New Testament and Dean of the Divinity School, Harvard University

MATURE CHRISTIANITY

Norman A. Beck

Norman Beck, Professor of Biblical Studies at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, identifies in detail the anti-Jewish polemic within each New Testament document, discusses reasons for the development of that polemic, places the anti-Jewish polemic of the New Testament into specific classifications, and suggests ways in which mature Christians can repudiate the defamatory anti-Jewish polemic of the New Testament without damage to their theology. \$19.50



Order from
SUSQUEHANNA UNIVERSITY PRESS
440 Forsgate Drive
Cranbury, New Jersey 08512

BOOKS RECEIVED

January through March, 1986

Listing of a book does not preclude its being reviewed in a subsequent issue of JUDAISM

American Jewish Life

- Altshuler, David, ed. *The Jews of Washington, D.C.* A Communal Anthology. Chappaqua, N.Y.: Rossell Books and The Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, 1986. xi + 360 pp., \$17.95.
- Fein, Richard J. *The Dance of Leah.* Discovering Yiddish in America. Cranbury, N.J.: Cornwall Books, 1986. 114 pp., \$22.50.
- Goldscheider, Calvin. *Jewish Continuity and Change.* Emerging Patterns in America. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986. xvi + 195 pp., \$24.95.
- Horowitz, David, *Pastor Charles Taze Russell.* An Early American Christian Zionist. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1986. 159 pp., \$15.95.
- Medding, Peter Y., ed. *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, II. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986. xv + 429 pp.
- Oren, Dan A. *Joining the Club.* A History of Jews and Yale. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. xiv + 440 pp., \$29.95.
- Sichrovsky, Peter. *Strangers in Their Own Land.* New York, 1986. 176 pp., \$14.95.

Anti-Semitism

- Berenson, David & Douglas Wertheimer. *A Trust Betrayed.* The Keegstra Affair. Toronto, Ont.: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1985. xvii + 241 pp., \$17.95.
- Gerber, David A., ed. *Anti-Semitism in American History.* Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1985. 428 pp., \$29.95.
- Gilman, Sander L. *Jewish Self-Hatred.* Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1985. xi + 461 pp., \$28.50.
- Poliakov, Leon. *The History of Anti-Semitism.* Suicidal Europe: 1870-1933. New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1986. xi + 422 pp., \$22.50.

Autobiography and Biography

- Avenary, Hanoch, ed. *Kantor Salomon Sulzer und Seine Zeit.* Eine Dokumentation (German). Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1986. 300 pp., DM 38.
- Fox, Richard. *Reinhold Niebuhr.* A Biography. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. x + 340 pp., \$19.95.
- Hammer, Gottlieb. *Good Faith and Credit.* New York: Cornwall Books, 1986. 258 pp., \$17.95.

Shargel, Baila Round. *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism*. Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1985. 223 pp., \$20.

Christianity

Ankori, Zvi. *Jews and Christian Greeks in Their Relation Through the Ages* (Hebrew). Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Univ., 1984. 199 pp.

Rosenberg, Ray A. *Who Was Jesus?* Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986. 123 pp., \$9.25 (paper).

Sigal, Phillip. *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986. xi + 269 pp., \$13.25 (paper).

Cookbooks

Berkowitz, Gila. *The New Jewish Cuisine*. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1986. xiii + 206 pp., \$17.95.

Schulman, Zell J. *Something Different For Passover*. Gainesville, Fla.: Triad Publishing Co., 1986. 188 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

Culture

Roskies, David G. *Against the Apocalypse*. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986. 374 pp., \$9.95 (paper).

European Jewry

Handler, Andrew. *From the Ghetto to the Games*. Jewish Athletes in Hungary. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986. ix + 140 pp., \$20.

Rogger, Hans. *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1986. viii + 285 pp., \$25.

Zipperstein, Steven J. *The Jews of Odessa*. A Cultural History, 1794-1881. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986. 212 pp., \$32.50.

Ethics

Block, Walter, Geoffrey Brennan and Kenneth Elzinga, eds. *Morality of the Market*. Religious and Economic Perspectives. Vancouver, Canada: The Fraser Institute. 601 pp. (paper).

Manning, Doug. *The Nursing Home Dilemma*. How to Make One of Love's Toughest Decisions. San Francisco, Cal.: Harper & Row, 1986. 100 pp., \$12.95.

Fiction

Ellis, Julie. *The Only Sin*. New York: Arbor House, 1986. 494 pp., \$17.95.

Freeman, Cynthia. *Illusions of Love*. New York: Berkley Books, 1986. 314 pp., \$4.50 (paper).

_____. *Seasons of the Heart*. New York: Putnam Publishing Co., 399 pp., \$17.95.

- Gross, Joel. *The Lives of Rachel*. New York: New American Library, 1986. 424 pp., \$20.95.
- Halter, Marek. *The Book of Abraham*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1986. 722 pp., \$19.95.
- Gold, Herbert. *Lovers & Cohorts*. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1986. 331 pp., \$17.95.
- Rauch, Gila Ramras and Joseph Michman-Malkman, eds. *Facing the Holocaust*. Selected Israeli Fiction. Philadelphia, Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1986. 292 pp., \$16.95.
- Singer, June Flaum, *The Markoff Woman*. New York: M. Evans & Co., Inc., 1986. 368 pp., \$16.95.

History

- Castel, François. *The History of Israel and Judah in Old Testament Times*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1986. 267 pp., \$8.95 (paper).
- Israel, Jonathan I. *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. 295 pp., \$34.50.
- Jagersma, H. *A History of Israel From Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. 224 pp. (paper).
- Kops, Bernard. "Neither Your Honey Nor Your Sting." Manchester, N.H.: Salem House Publishers, 1986. 148 pp., \$13.95.
- Rejwan, Nissim. *The Jews of Iraq*. 300 Years of History and Culture. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986. 274 pp., \$30.
- Semi, Emanuela Trevisan. *Gli ebrei Caraiti tra etnia e religione*. Rome: Carucci, 1986. 247 pp., 16,000 lire (paper).

Holocaust

- Bardakjian, K.B. *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*. Cambridge: The Zoryan Institute, 1985. 81 pp.
- Gilbert, Martin. *The Holocaust*. A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986. 959 pp., \$24.95.
- Stroop, Juergen. *The Stroop Report*. The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is No More. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986. \$9.95 (paper).
- Wistrich, Robert. *Hitler's Apocalypse*. Jews and the Nazi Legacy. New York: St. Martins Press, 1986. viii + 309 pp., \$17.95.

Israel

- Cohen, Stuart A. and Eliezer Don-Yehiya. *Conflict and Consensus in Jewish Political Life*. Ramat Aviv: Bar Ilan Univ. Press, 1986. 218 pp.

Juvenile and Young Adults

- Simon, Kate. *A Wider World — Portraits in an Adolescence*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 186 pp., \$14.95.

Literary Criticism

Prawer, S.S. *Heine's Jewish Comedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. 841 pp., \$19.95 (paper).

Midrash

Hartman, Geoffrey H. and Sanford Budick, eds. *Midrash and Literature*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1986. 412 pp., \$28.50.

Mysticism

Dan, Joseph. *Jewish Mysticism & Jewish Ethics*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1986. xi + 133 pp., \$20.

Heffman, Edward. *The Heavenly Ladder*. The Jewish Guide to Inner Growth. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. 140 pp., \$8.95 (paper).

Schweid, Eliezer. *Judaism and Mysticism According to Gershom Scholem*. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1985. 178 pp., \$16.95 (paper).

Philosophy

Kaufman, William E. *Contemporary Jewish Philosophers*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986. xiv + 276 pp., \$12.25 (paper).

Photographs

Aron, Bill. *From the Corners of the Earth*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986. 144 pp., \$35 (paper).

Religion

Alpert, Rebecca T. and Jacob J. Staub. *Exploring Judaism. Reconstructionist Approach*. New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1986. 97 pp. (paper).

Miller, William Lee. *The First Liberty. Religion and the American Republic*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986. viii + 373 pp., \$24.95.

Oppenheim, Michael. *What Does Revelation Mean For the Modern Jews?* Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985. 151 pp., \$39.95.

Rappaport, S. *Perspectives on Judaism*. Johannesburg: B'nai B'rith, 1985. x + 377.

Theology

Sonsino, Rifat and Daniel B. Syme. *Finding God. Ten Jewish Responses*. New York: UAHC, 1986. 140 pp., \$7.95 (paper).

Torah

Neusner, Jacob. *The Oral Torah*. The Sacred Books of Judaism. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. xvii + 238 pp., \$19.95.

Sarna, Nahum M. *Exploring Exodus*. The Heritage of Biblical Israel. New York: Schocken Books, 1986. xii + 277 pp., \$17.95.

Sparks, H.F.D., ed. *The Apocryphal Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. xxii + 990 pp., \$19.95 (paper).

Articles

Author	Title	Page
ARZT, DONNA E.	The People's Lawyers: The Predominance of Jews in Public Interest Law	47
BERENBAUM, MICHAEL	The Nativization of the Holocaust	447
CARGILL, JACK	David in History: A Secular Approach	14
CHAZAN, ROBERT	Questions and Answers: Jewish Studies in the University	137
CHERTOK, HAIM	The Book of Ruth — Complexities Within Simplicity	290
COHEN, JEFFREY M.	Are These Blessings Really Offensive?	340
COHN, ROBERT L.	Biblical Responses to Catastrophe	263
CRUISE, P.E.	The Problem of Being Simone Weil	98
DAVIS, MOSHE	On University Teaching of Contemporary Jewish Civilization	170
ELLENSON, DAVID	"Our Brothers and Our Flesh": Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Jews of Ethiopia	63
FEINBERG, CHAIM	Maimonides and Cordovero: The Rationalist and the Mystic	325
FEUER, LEWIS S.	The Reasoning of Holocaust Theology	178
FISHBANE, MICHAEL	The Academy and the Community	147
FISHER, EUGENE J.	The Holocaust and the State of Israel: A Catholic Perspective	16
FOX, MARVIN	Some Reflections on Jewish Studies in American Universities	140
GAMZU, YOSSEI	Isaac and Ishmael Write About Each Other	306
GILLMAN, NEIL	Authority and Authenticity in Jewish Philosophy	223
GLATT, MELVIN JAY	Midrash: The Defender of God	87
GORDIS, ROBERT	The Interfaith Movement — A Multiple Vision	7
	Jewish Studies in the University	134
	Personal Names in <i>Ruth</i> — A Note on Biblical Etymologies	298
GOLDSMITH, EMANUEL S.	The Divine Humor of Sholom Aleichem: On His 70th Yortsayt	391

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
HABERMAN, JACOB	Some Changing Aspects of Jewish Scholarship	183
HALPERIN, IRVING	Teaching the Holocaust by Indirection	441
HAMMER, REUVEN	Two Approaches to the Problem of Suffering	300
HANDELMAN, SUSAN	"Everything Is In It": Rabbinic Interpretation and Modern Literary Theory	429
HELLIG, JOCELYN	South African Judaism: An Expression of Conservative Traditionalism	235
HYMAN, FRIEDA CLARK	The Education of a Queen	78
JACOBSON, HOWARD	Visions of the Past: Jews and Greeks	467
KLEPFISZ, HESZEL	Joy, The Psychological Enigma of East European Jewry	351
LA SOR, WILLIAM SANFORD	Protestants and Jews	10
LEVIN S.	The Sickness of Sodom	281
OCH, BERNARD	Judaism As Tragic Religion	487
OPPENHEIM, MICHAEL	Eliezer Schweid: A Philosophy of Return	66
ROBINSON, IRA	Because of Our Many Sins: The Contemporary Jewish World as Reflected in the Responsa of Moses Feinstein	35
ROSENZWEIG, MICHAEL L.	A Helper Equal to Him	277
ROSHWALD, MORDECAI	The Wall of Communication	483
ROTH, NORMAN	Jewish Studies in America — Present Problems and Future Prospects	162
SALKIN, JEFFREY K.	Dinah, The Torah's Forgotten Woman	284
SCHWARTZ, MATTHEW J.	Koheleth and Camus: Two Views of Achievement	29
SCHWARZ, SIDNEY H.	Redefining Zionism	316
SIEGMAN, HENRY	Christian-Jewish Relations: Still A Way to Go	25
SILVER, DANIEL JEREMY	Choose Life	458
STILLMAN, NORMAN A.	The Parameters of Success: Jewish Studies in the University	155
TREPP, LEO	Toward a "S'lihah" on the Holocaust	344
VAN PRAAG, HERMAN M.	The Downfall of King Saul: The Neurobiological Consequences of Losing Hope	414

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
ZUCKER, DAVID JEREMY	Jacob in Darkness (And Light): A Study in Contrasts	402

Reviews

<i>Reviewer</i>	<i>Book and Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
BERLIN, ADELE	The Five Scrolls ed. by Albert H. Friedlander and Robert Brownstein	249
BOKSER, BARUCH M.	R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: A Scholar Out- cast by Y.D. Gilat	249
FLUSSER, DAVID	Jesus and the World of Judaism Review-Essay on Jesus and the World of Judaism by Geza Vernes	361
GELLER, STEPHEN A.	In the Beginning: A New English Rendi- tion of the Book of Genesis by Everett Fox	114
KIEL, MARK W.	Creativity Holocaust Reconstruction: Jewish Life in Wuerdttenberg by Herman Dicker	374
LEWIS, THEODORE N.	Voices of Resurgent Islam ed. by John L. Esposito	120
MILGROM, JACOB	Before Abraham Was by Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn	371
PATAI, RAPHAEL	Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment tr. and with an Introduction by Daniel Chanan Matt	251
PFEFFER, LEO	My World As a Jew: The Memoirs of Israel Goldstein	376
RABINOVE, SAMUEL	The First Liberty. Religion and the American Republic by William Lee Miller	502
SAMUELSON, NORBERT M.	The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corpo- real Election by Michael Wyschogrod	498
SEESKIN, KENNETH	Evil and the Morality of God by Harold Schulweis	117

<i>Reviewer</i>	<i>Book and Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
SIGAL, PHILLIP J.	Sermons to be Read in Context Review-Essay on John Chrysostom and the Jews by Robert Wilken	243
WINSTON, DAVID	New Light on An Old Drama Review-Essay on The Exagoge of Eze- kiel by Howard Jacobson	109
YUTER, ALAN J.	Jewish Questions, Rabbinic Answers Review-Essay on American Reform Responsa ed. by Walter Jacob	502
Verse		
FISHER, ADAM D.	Shavuot	289
FRANK, BERNHARD	Icarus Too	446
GOLDIN, JUDAH	Morning	248
PACERNICK, GARY	Psalm	339
PENNANT, EDMUND	On Mount Meron	86
TROPE, ROLAND	Fridays in Leningrad	107

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Act of August 12, 1970, Section 3685, title 39, United States Code). 1. Date of Filing: October 1, 1986. 2. Title of Publication: JUDAISM. 3. Frequency of Issue: Quarterly. 4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. 5. Location of Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 15 East 84th Street, New York New York 10028. 6. Names and addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Editor: Robert Gordis, 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. Managing Editor: Ruth B. Waxman, 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. 7. Owner: American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028, non-profit, non-stockholding. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. 10. For completion by non-profit organizations authorized to mail at special rates: The purpose, function, and non-profit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months. 11. Extent and nature of circulation. A. Total number of copies (net press run). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 5,762. Single issue nearest filing date 6,150. B. Paid circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 525. Single issue nearest filing date 550. 2. Mail subscriptions. Average number of copies during preceding 12 months 4,814. Single issue nearest filing date 5,289. C. Total paid circulation. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 5,339. Single issue nearest filing date 5,839. D. Free distribution (including samples) by mail, carrier or other means. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 125. Single issue nearest filing date 125. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 5,464. Single issue nearest filing date 5,964. F. Copies not distributed. 1. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 150. Single issue nearest filing date 100. 2. Return from news agents. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 148. Single issue nearest filing date 86. G. Sum of E and F—should equal net press run shown in A. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 5,762. Single issue nearest to filing date 6,150. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Ruth B. Waxman, Managing Editor.

Oxford

Wilhelm Marr

The Patriarch of Antisemitism

MOSHE ZIMMERMANN, *The Hebrew University, Jerusalem*

The first biography of radical writer and politician Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904), the man who introduced the term "anti-Semitism" into politics and founded the first "Antisemitic League," this study presents a portrait of a period when the classical, religiously-oriented Christian hatred of Jews gave way to modern, politically-rooted racist attitudes.

(*Studies in Jewish History*)

1986 192 pp. \$19.95

Winner of the 1986 National Jewish Book Award for Scholarship
and the 1986 Kenneth B. Smilen Literary Award for Jewish
Religious Thought

Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel

MICHAEL FISHBANE, *Brandeis University*

This highly-acclaimed book offers the first comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of textual analysis in ancient Israel. It explores the rich tradition of exegesis prior to the development of biblical interpretation in early classical Judaism and the earliest Christian communities.

1986 704 pp. \$39.95

New from the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization

Victorian Jews through British Eyes

ANNE COWEN, *Polytechnic of Central London*, and RICHARD COWEN

Drawing from Victorian magazines such as the *Illustrated London News*, *Punch*, and *The Graphic*, this innovative social history reveals how Jewish subjects were presented to Victorian readers in 19th-century England.

1986 244 pp.; 150 line drawings \$48.00

Menasseh ben Israel

The Hope of Israel

Edited by HENRY MECHOULAN, *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris*, and GERARD NAHON, *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris*

Originally translated into English in 1652, Menasseh ben Israel's *The Hope of Israel* aroused great interest and helped lead to the re-admission of Jews under Cromwell in 1656. Now with a new introduction and explicit notes, this work enlightens our understanding of one of the most learned and prolific rabbis of 17th-century Europe.

1986 224 pp. \$37.00

Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought

From Maimonides to Abravanel

MENACHEM KELLNER, *University of Haifa*

This study of the history of ideas traces the development of creed formulation in Judaism from its inception with Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) to the beginning of the 16th century when systematic attention to the problem disappeared from the agenda of Jewish intellectuals.

1986 350 pp. \$36.00

Prices are subject to change.

To order, send check or money order to: Humanities & Social Sciences Marketing Dept.

Oxford University Press

200 Madison Avenue • New York, NY 10016

JUDAISM

30 97891

\$3.50

FALL 1986

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED